



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



UC-NRLF



\$B 165 857



ALASKANA

PROF. BUSHROD W. JAMES AMMD.



YC158995

Prelim

REESE LIBRARY

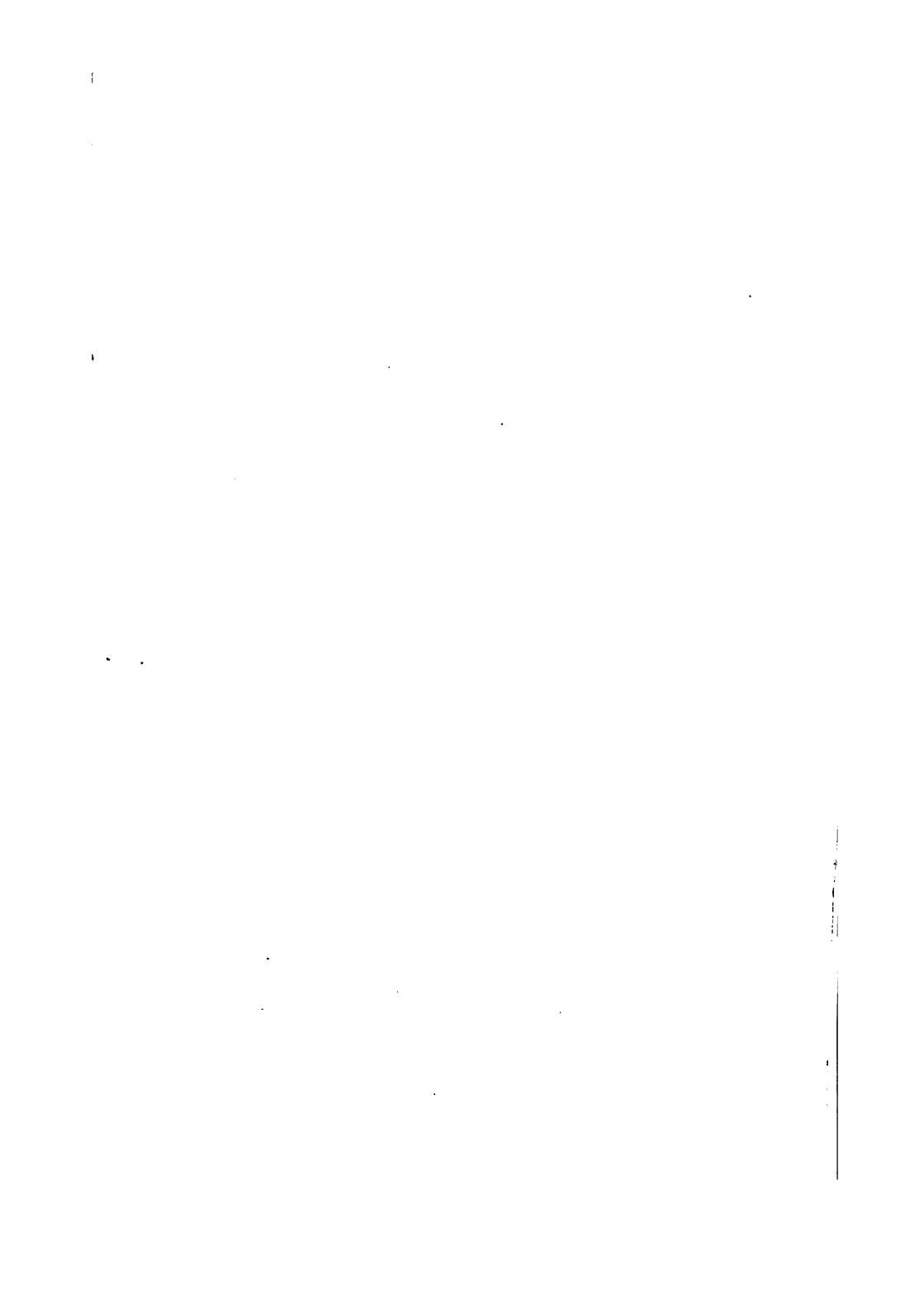
OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Received MAR 14 1893 189 .

Accessions No. 50520. Class No. 953.

J27

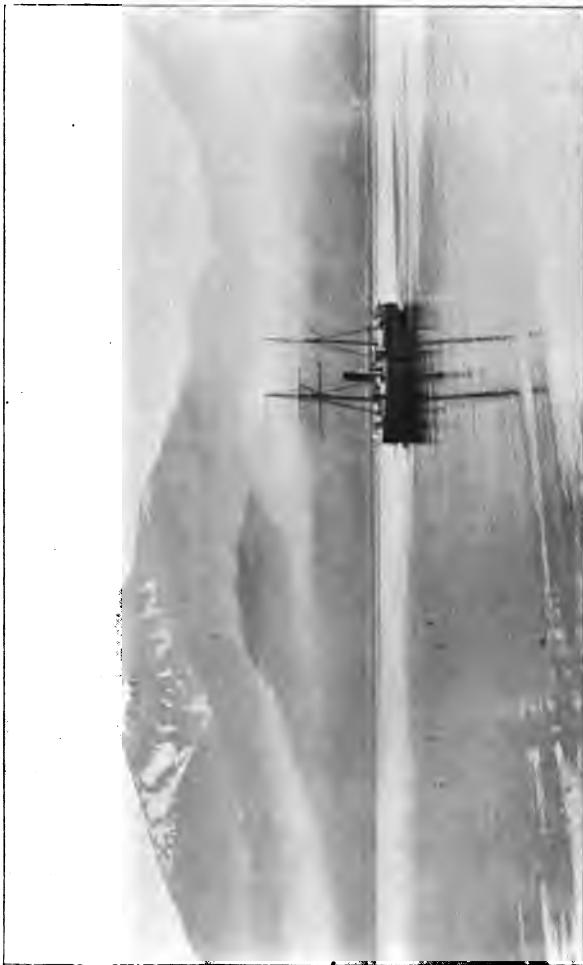








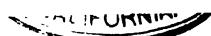
MOUNTAIN AND CHANNEL.



11A

the Legendary

11A
MAY
1968
SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA





ALASKANA

OR

Alaska in Descriptive and Legendary Poems

BY

PROF. BUSHROD W. JAMES, A.M., M.D.

*Member of the Society of Natural History and Ethnology, Sitka, Alaska.
Pennsylvania Historical Society; Academy of Natural Sciences; Franklin
Institute, Philadelphia; American Association for the Advancement
of Science; American Academy of Political and Social Science;
American Public Health Association; Professor of
Physiology in the New York Medical College
and Hospital for Women, etc.*



PHILADELPHIA
PORTER & COATES

1892



Copyrighted, 1892,
By BUSHROD W. JAMES.

50520

All rights reserved.

F905

J26

1893

M.J.W

DEDICATION.

TO MY INTIMATE, WORTHY AND ESTEEMED FRIEND, AND
FELLOW-TRAVELER THROUGH NORWAY, SWEDEN, FIN-
LAND, RUSSIA, AND OTHER FOREIGN LANDS,

PROFESSOR JABEZ P. DAKE, M.D.,
OF NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE,

WHO HAS A KEEN APPRECIATION OF SCENIC GRANDEUR AND
BEAUTY, I DEDICATE THIS HUMBLE EFFORT AT
RECORDING SOME OF THE NOTES TAKEN
ON MY TOUR IN ALASKA.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

AFTER having made a tour in Alaska and beholding the beauties that are spread through its water-ways, along its coasts, and in the few towns of which it can boast ; having had glimpses into the peculiarities of its people, and the natural resources of wealth that are to be obtained from its animal and vegetable kingdoms ; I became so deeply impressed that I resolved to perpetuate my visit in verse, when involuntarily the weird, rhymeless style of "The Kalevala" and "Hiawatha" touched me as more appropriate than any other measure for the description of a people and country, as yet, so little known, but so well worthy of nearer acquaintance.

I am not egotist enough to suppose that my book may do much toward attracting tourists or speculators to the land, the possession of which makes a truth of the statement that "the sun never sets" on the Republic of the United States. But if even a few are moved by it to visit its magnificent glaciers, its beautiful straits and channels, and the towns and villages so strangely different from our own Eastern cities; if one or two are tempted to look into the gold-mines of Douglass Island, or to while a little time in sight of Sitka's beautiful sound and harbor, I will feel that I have not written in vain.

I suppose there comes to every one the desire to tell of what he has seen. Some may do it far more ably than others; but one must feel that he owes an apology for his boldness in again entering his name among the authors of his day—and this I do, taking as my excuse the living pictures that have haunted me with their strangeness or their

loveliness ever since I roamed among them a few years ago.

While on my visit to Alaska, and some time thereafter, I published a series of letters descriptive of that which I saw; for these I received kind mention in some of our magazines and daily papers. Such tokens of appreciation, together with the success of my book entitled "American Resorts and Climates," published in 1889, led me to attempt this work.

In the progress of the writing of these poems I have consulted the various Government publications on Alaska, and such writers as Prof. Elliott, Charles Hallock, Lieutenant Schwatka, Dr. Sheldon Jackson and Mrs. Willard; all of whom have been placed in such positions as to know far more of the territory and its inhabitants than I could possibly have learned during my visit; therefore my thanks are due to them, in a great measure, if I have succeeded in giving any graphic descriptions of the people and their customs. I thank other authors of more

recent date which I have also consulted. Of the scenery—in sunshine and clouds, in darkness and in moonlight; of the spring-like beauty of some parts, the icy grandeur of glacier fields and glaciers, of bays and inlets, and of other portions of the country—I have living pictures, from personal observation, that can never fade from my memory.

BUSHROD W. JAMES.

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Introduction | 9 |
| Bering's Voyage to Alaska—Legend of | 17 |
| Alaska | 26 |
| Sitka | 32 |
| Alaskan Native Tribes | 40 |
| Algæ of Alaska | 52 |
| Flora in Alaska | 59 |
| Birds of Alaska | 70 |
| A Humming-Bird in Sitka | 77 |
| Indian River | 84 |
| Alaskan Marriage | 89 |
| Totems | 97 |
| Alaskan Doctors | 109 |
| Power of the Medicine Men | 122 |
| A Medicine Man's Burial | 130 |
| A Haidah Taamish | 138 |
| The Alaska Indian's Funeral | 144 |
| Indian's Dread of Drowning | 152 |

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|---|------------|
| Co-e-ky or Death Feast | 157 |
| Festival of U-gi-ak | 165 |
| Potlatch | 170 |
| Hot Springs of Alaska | 179 |
| Clubbing the Sea-Otter | 185 |
| Morse and Mahlemoot | 192 |
| The Seal or Pribilof Islands | 200 |
| The Seals of Alaska | 210 |
| Na-ass River—Legend of | 217 |
| Fishing on Na-ass River | 223 |
| Pinnacle Islet | 229 |
| The Birth of Bogaslov Islet—Legend of | 235 |
| Indian Legend of the Large Glacier on Stickeen River | 243 |
| Chilkat Legend of the Raven | 251 |
| The Owl—Legend of | 260 |
| Yehl—Legend of | 271 |
| Mount Edgecumbe—Legend of | 279 |
| Baranov Castle—Legend of | 290 |
| The Silent City—Modern Legend of | 299 |
| Cliff-Builders | 304 |
| Taku Inlet | 315 |
| Muir Glacier | 320 |
| Mirage in Alaska | 334 |
| Moonlight in Alaska | 342 |
| Aurora | 349 |
| Sunset in Alaska | 355 |
| Appendix | 361 |



INTRODUCTION.

IN a mansion by a streamlet,
On a tilled and fertile farm-land—
In a homestead rich with beauty,
Made by art and nature, blending
In a fair, harmonious union :
At the silent hour of midnight,
In the weird, still hour of dreaming,
Started first these wandering flood-tides ;
Opened then the gates of musing
O'er the scenes through which I've lingered,
Over countries bathed in lustre,
Shed from classics, grand and ancient,—
Countries bearing on their banners
Symbols bold 'of nations, noble

In their learning and their prowess,
In their trustful deeds of honor:
Over lands who glory ever
In their brilliant feats of conquest,
Proud to bear upon their signets
Emblems of their daring contests;
Marking not the mighty roll-call,
Counting not the streams of life-blood
That have rushed, and ebbed, and fallen,
But to swell a broader boundary,
But to line a grander border;
For the flag that led them onward,
That its creeping folds should farther
Wave, and mark a Nation's glory!
On they wandered, those late musings,
Over mountains bold and frowning—
Over snowy peaks and ranges,
Or through vales of sparkling beauty,
Of such loveliness and fairness
As a poet's heart would fancy
Pure and bright enough for dwellings
For his grandest thought creations.

Later, memory touched a country,
As a needle finds a magnet,
Thus my thoughts clung close around it,
Tremblingly at first, then steady,
Till all else grew dimly distant,
All the classic grandeur faded,
And once more my footsteps wandered,
In those wakeful hours of midnight,
Far beyond great city noises—
Distant from the blooming farm-lands,
Far away from kindred faces
And from soft familiar voices;
Till my ears were filled with jargon
Much beyond my comprehension:
And I saw strange, dusky faces—
Faces, wild with savage cunning,
Swarthy faces, marked with sea-breath,
Or with scars of heathen beauty.
Some had skins so finely textured
That the crimson blood shone through them,
Rich and bright as warm Italia
Often tints her fairest daughters.

Others, black and rendered hideous
By their strange and cruel customs—
By their marks of heathen torture,
Or the paint smeared o'er them rudely.
More I saw—a country added
To a glory-crowned republic !
Not a blood-stained, cowering tribute
Lowering under smouldering ashes,—
Under ashes holding embers
That but wait a hand to fan them
Into fierce, rebellious flaming,
Into fires too hot for quenching,—
But a land made ours by purchase !
Bought, without a crimson signing
Of the title-deed that makes it
Part of this most noble Union.
Lofty mountains towered above me,
Snow-capped mountains, bold and stately,—
Old volcanoes, still and hoary,
Grimly frowned across my pathway ;
Rugged cliffs and grass-grown hillocks
Sheltered peaceful, smiling valleys ;

Spicy firs and feathery spruces
Whispered in my ear soft music
Touched by breezes, pure and balmy,
Whose clear cadences awakened
Thoughts of home, for so the branches
Answer in the same sweet language
To the tunes the wood-sprites murmur
In the trees that bend above me,
When my weary steps turn homeward,
And my sated brain needs resting
From the pleasant task of taking,
Grasping, and retaining pictures
That, forever spread before me,
Tempt with such alluring radiance
As to make me wish to wander,
And to long for wing-tipped sandals
And a frame with Sampson's vigor !
Onward still my musings traveled,
When a sad-toned night-bird calling,
In the trees around my dwelling,
Caused an eagle's scream to echo
As I heard it in the cañons,

In the distant, icy North-land,
Where he lives unharmed by marksmen—
Monarch of his lofty crag-nest,
And the cliffs that guard his dwelling.
Once an owl's weird cry resounding,
Called to mind the flocks of ravens
Strutting in the streets and doorways,
Croaking with their soulless voices,
And with brazen boldness robbing
Friend or foe with none to hinder.
Sacred birds ! By heathens worshipped
As fair nature's great creators !
Black-winged signs of midnight darkness
Over-spreading human outcasts,
As a pall of inky blackness
Shades a sombre, funeral casket !
And the land of silenced midday
Sleeping 'neath the ice-god's reigning,
With such realistic coldness
That my very blood seemed colder,
Rose before me, still and silent,
Save that now and then a hoof-beat

Made the gleaming ice-crust crackle ;
Or a ptarmigan's low piping
Waked an echo, whose vibrations
Caused the silence to seem deeper
When the last sweet chord had flitted
Far beyond my power of hearing.
Or, that country loomed before me,
With the radiant sunshine glancing
Over glaciers, slowly gliding—
Moving in majestic grandeur,
Onward toward the broad Pacific—
Toward the boundless, roaring waters
Waiting ever to receive them—
Those bright ice-cliffs that lean over,
Bending toward the restless waters,
Till the surging billows charm them,
And they plunge in bright abandon
Deep within the ocean's bosom !
Gems of landscape pass before me
Like some glorious panorama !
Sparkling rills and river courses
Marked by emerald tints of verdure—

Woods with shady deep recesses,
Guarded well by tangled branches,
Hung with graceful, grey festooning,
Formed by living mossy streamers—
Waving mosses, that seem ever
Seeking out the barren branches,
That their wiry roots may cover
And be-drape with clinging beauty.
There an antlered deer stands gazing—
Fearlessly his dark eyes scan me—
While the song-birds trill sweet music
And the air, with perfume laden,
Tells of blossoms bright and lovely.
So the music and the fragrance
Steep my senses in their richness,
And my spirit sees, in fancy,
All my musings penned in verses—
Verses, that like pale snow-fairies
Wander forth, perhaps to waken
Some stray thought to stalwart action,
Or, mayhap, to sink like raindrops
Out of sight and life forever!



AUK GLACIER.





BERING'S VOYAGE TO ALASKA.

OUT upon the sea went sailing—
Out from safe home-port and country—
Forth upon an unknown pathway—
Two small vessels, rudely fashioned,
Built so frailly that most daring
Were the strong, brave men that sailed them,
True and firm the hands that manned them;
And the hearts, that throbbed expectant,
Longed to meet and conquer perils.
Built and named to sail in consort,
Now they started forth together,
Facing unknown ocean dangers,
Steering for a wild, new country,—
For a land unknown and distant.

And the leaders planned between them
How they'd land and take possession—
How their native home should owe them
Honor and renown, for placing
On the distant shore the standard—
Russia's waving flag—as token
That her people first had landed
In the great, new world that borders
On the East—the fair Pacific !
As they ventured on together,
Day and night each saw the other,—
Night and day they held more closely,
Every hour hope growing stronger,
That ere long their eyes should open
On the shores they learned to covet
More and more, as time delaying
Held them from their wished-for glory.
Suddenly their way was darkened
By the storm-clouds bending over,
Hiding from their eyes the sunlight—
Threatening them with deep-toned thunder!
At his post stood every seaman,

Ready at an instant's notice
To obey the least commanding
Of the leaders whom he trusted.
Then the storm broke in with fury,
And the ocean's heaving bosom
Answered to the fierce cloud-voices
With a low and plaintive moaning ;
While the winds grew hoarse with telling
Of the deluge, that the blackness
Heralded to those who lingered
In the track the storm had chosen !
Down the rain poured, sweeping torrents
Drenched the ships from stern to bowsprit—
Made the shrinking sails hang leaden
From the creaking masts and rigging.
And each silent sailor's answer
To his stern commander's shouting
Was a grasp as strong as iron
And a will to do or perish.
Close those vessels held together,
Fearing each to lose the other
In the dreary waste of waters

That was tossing them like drift-wood
In the blinding, surging billows.
But a sad hour came, when signals
Failed to bring returning answers—
For the wind and storm-beat ocean
Smothered, in the fierce confusion,
Every sound that man could utter,
And the thunder's mighty crashing
Buried in its loud vibrations
Every booming of the ship-guns,
As they tried to greet each other—
As each tried to find the other
In that fearful din and roaring
Of the frightful, tempest voices !
Far apart the billows bore them,
And the storm's breath swept them farther,
Till the ships that sailed together—
Those twin boats with saintly sponsors*—
Never side by side dropped anchor.
Never more furled sails, nor spread them
As one boat with one commander.

* See note in Appendix.

And the men who sailed upon them
Ne'er again in life held converse
Nor beheld each other's faces.
Bering's ship made aimless headway
Through the tempest's shock and vapor—
Through the wind's faith-trying changes
And the ocean's trackless pathways,
Till it drifted toward the mainland,
Toward the bleak and lonely sea-line,
And the great birds screamed a welcome
To the coast of wild Alaska.
But a little while they lingered,
For the land was bare and lonely,
And the ship was far more home-like
Than the dreary bluffs and mountains
Standing out as barren strongholds
Close between the sky and ocean.
Then a fiercer storm broke o'er them—
Driving them before its fury—
Hurling them with ruthless vengeance
O'er the wilderness of waters—
O'er the faithless, surging waters

Of the wild, unknown Pacific !
How they sailed, and tacked, and drifted,
Longing for some welcome landing,
Wishing for some quiet haven
Where the sick, the sad, the weary,
Might find peaceful rest and comfort,
Or, at least, find time for dying !
How they bowed in strict obedience
To their leader's stern ambition,
Though their hollow eyes grew sadder
With the suffering and the longing—
With the wishful, eager throbbing
Of their hearts for home and dear ones !
When at last his spirit faltered,
And he steered his vessel homeward,
How those dying sailors answered
To the last commands he uttered !
Though he seemed so strangely sullen
Their allegiance never wavered.
When, heartbroken, he grew silent,
Still the voice of his lieutenant
Spoke but once, to have his answer

In his orders strictly carried ;
Though their limbs refused their office
And one man upheld another
To the work, that bade their sail-boat
Bear them back to Russia's borders.
Time passed on, they must be nearing,
So they thought, their native seaport ;
And they strained their eyes at morning—
Longing gazed, at evening's closing,
For the welcome hazy outlines
Of the coast of old Kamtchatka ;
But, alas ! they gazed all vainly—
Hoped and longed for what was growing
Distant from them, as the vessel
Bore them here and there, false-guided—
Rocked them in its sea-beat bulwarks,
Careless that those suffering seamen
Found at last all hope had withered—
Found themselves as useless timber,
Sick and heartless, sad, storm-driven—
Lost upon the sea, whose waters
Lave the shore they sadly longed for,

Wash the port they longed to enter.
Numb'd with cold and growing weary,
Powerless now to reef or furl them,
Uselessly the sails hung, flapping
Like great birds of evil omen,
Beating with their taunting pinions
Dirges for the crew and captain,
Who were drifting at the mercy
Of the restless winds and waters !
“ Land ahoy !” Alas the vessel
Half disabled, almost sinking,
Feebly turned toward the haven ;
But her weakened sails were helpless ;
When they anchored, hawsers parted—
When they neared the shore the wave-caps
Flaunted in their eager faces,
Blinding spray and briny greetings—
Chilling hearts and numbing fingers,
Till despair once more reigned over
All those weary, helpless sailors.
Then at last the mild Pacific
Raised that frail bark on its bosom—

Raised it tenderly, and laid it
With its freight of human suffering—
With its heart-sick crew and captain—
High and safe within a harbor.
Safe from wind, and wave, and shipwreck,
On the shores of fair Alaska !
Bering saw the land, then closing
Once for all his weary eyelids,
Left his ashes as a tribute
To the isle whereon he landed.
But his name has lain for ages
On the waters that his sail-boat
Cleft with prow so nearly useless ;
And the men who braved such dangers
Lived to show to coming nations
That those bleak, wild shores are laden
Rich with wealth for those with spirits
Bold and brave enough to win it.

ALASKA.

FAIR to North and West there nestles,
Close between two mighty guardians—
Held within the soft embraces
Of a myriad flashing tendrils
That surround and touch her beauty
With their moving, glittering jewels
As a necklace, gemmed and gilded,
Decks and beautifies the wearer—
Closely nestles fair Alaska,
Leaning on the broad Pacific;
Resting on the throbbing waters,
Dipping far into its bosom—
Bending low to hear its music,
And to see her own wild features

Gazing out from bays as placid
As a mirror's polished surface—
Or to see that image broken
Into fragments by the ripples,
And then carried by them onward,
Till, half wearied by their burden,
Half in gleeful sport, they fling them—
Brilliant fragments of her picture,
Far and wide beyond their reaching—
Only to return and gather,
Bear away and gaily scatter
Other bold or fair reflections
Of her nature bright and changeful.
On the north, her Arctic guardian
Frowns upon such senseless frolic
And, in calm and stolid duty,
Bears his portion of her wardship ;
Throws his giant bulwarks round her,
Sheathing with his crystal armor
Every tempting curve and dimple
When she smiles upon the grimness—
Holding there, in pallid stillness,

Faintest outlines of her contour,
As she throws her slender shadows
Prone upon his breast, and lingers
Near his heart, as if to touch him
And to soften with her presence
Into smiles his soulless features.
Coldly, silently, he gathers
Round her form his spotless mantle—
Wreathes her brow with purest brilliants
Chosen from his royal casket,
And around her casts a girdle,
Silver clear, and clasped so firmly
That no hand has strength to loosen
From his bonds her Northern borders !
Fast he binds the dauntless vessels
That have tried to find a harbor
On the coast he keeps so sacred ;
For he holds them with his ice-chains
That but wait his strong upheaval
To reduce their brittle timbers
Into useless, splintered wreckage.
High and bold her mountain ranges

Crest her shore and dip their shadows
Deep into the dark blue sea-wells
That are waveless, as if awe struck
At the grand, majestic presence !
Hills with verdure topped and skirted,
Valleys gay with golden poppies,
Granite crag, with naked foreheads,
Guarding well the river passes—
Great volcanoes, cold and scar-seamed
Resting from their fiery belchings,
Bearing in their rough crevasses
Ghost-like ashes of their passion—
Mountains, rearing snow-capped summits
Far into the sun's bright kingdom—
Ranges over-topping ranges,
Darkly frowning, palely ghost-like,
Peering through the clefts once riven
By some shock that made earth tremble—
Here and there one, taller, nobler,
Standing forth alone and peerless,
Like a mighty chief in armor,
Holding converse with his vassals,

But with grandly king-like bearing
Binding them in stern subjection—
Bidding them make no encroachments
On his grey and stony ramparts.
All upon her breast upholden
Are these tender gems of beauty,
Are these trackless crags and mountains,
And, as mothers hold their children,
With no frowning at the burden.
Mighty glaciers, bound for ages
To her brow with icy fetters,
Glow in varied tints of azure,
Like a crown with sapphire setting ;
And the tinkling rills and streamlets
Make sweet music for her dreaming,
As they drip, and run, and murmur
From their coldly sparkling birth-place.
Rivers seam her glorious landscape—
Mighty rivers, broad and rapid,
Made to bear upon their bosoms—
Safe and sure to bear and hold them,
Vessels built for trade or travel—

Ships for commerce, large and noble—
Daintier crafts for eager tourists,
Or canoes like skimming swallows;
Dashing rivers, headlong rushing—
With no object but their finding
Some clear outlet for the spirits
Which control their mad careering—,
Rivers, too, whose quiet currents
Steal their way through narrow passes
Noiselessly, as if the cañons
Awed their hearts to abject silence.
Bays indent her lovely shore-lines
With their placid, tinted faces,
Beaming in a thousand dimples
On her guards of granite boulders ;
And her broad, arterial channels
Lead among rich island beauties,
That bewilder with their changes ;
Lead through fairy woodland wonders
And through Arctic cold and silence—
From the quivering smiles of spring-time
To the weird, majestic stillness
That surrounds this ice-bound kingdom.

SITKA.

LOOK, the sound is faintly tinted
With the sun's departing glory!
Where the mountains frown the shadows
Slowly creep to darker shading;
Tree-tops bend toward the water
Where their pictures, softly mingling
With the rippling waves and eddies,
Lose themselves in changeful fragments—
Bound and bend in leafy patches—
On the crested wavelets dancing,
In the glass-like hollows sinking,
But to rise again and glisten
In the twilight's lingering beauty.
Here a cup-like blossom tosses

SITKA, ALASKA, AND MOUNT EDGECUMBE.





Perfume, like a dream of sweetness,
To the breeze, which bears it onward
Toward the sky whose blue is rarest
Where the misty clouds break open.
See the shades of pink and golden,
Resting on the blue, like jewels—
There the banks of gray grow rosy
Where the glow but tips their edges ;
And the waves, reflecting, gleaming,
Re-repeat the cloud-land's fairness,
Till the air is brightly laden
With the evening's tender welcome.
O'er Verstova's misty grandeur
Lights and shades are slowly creeping,
There a glint of gold is heightened
By a line of velvet darkness ;
Tints of pink and purple blended
Float around his sides and paint them—
But his haughty head lifts proudly
Far beyond the sunset shading.
O'er it rests a golden halo,
With no cloud to dim its glory.

Edgecumbe's sides blaze richer, redder,
Where the beaming sunlight gilds them ;
Here and there a snow-wreath loiters
To enhance his lonely splendor,
While the night seems slowly rising
From his deep and silent crater,
Spreading o'er his top its blackness
Ere it shadows earth and water.
Hush ! Across the sound's clear ripples
Hear the silvery chimes repeating
Notes that wake the sleeping echoes
In the mountain's rugged summit—
Tones that ring across the valleys
And reverberate so sweetly
From the rocks and gloomy caverns,
Touching every point and crevice,
And rebounding, waving, rolling,
In one glorious diapason.
Whence the sound ? Old Sitka's steeple
Rears itself in emerald brightness
Near the sound and in the valley,
Where the quaint old town is nestled,

And the angelus resounding
Day-by-day the sound-waves carry
Far beyond the streets and dwellings—
Up and out till nature answers
With the voice that bides its bidding
In the dim and rock-bound distance.
In the church, the sacred pictures
Glow with plate of gold and silver,
Gleam with rarely precious jewels,
Out from which the tender faces
Shine in strange, unearthly beauty.
Altar, walls, and windows glisten
With a grandeur gayly brilliant,
Which the church of Greece has chosen
As her own from distant ages.
But the house for native worship,
Out beyond the church's shadow,
Seems to lack the need of lasting,
So its crumbling walls and rafters
Tell that soon the time will hasten
When the only sign to mark it
Will be crushed and broken timbers !

Yet Baranov Castle windows
Gaze across the bay as bravely
As when glancing swords and helmets
Held it safe on roof and rampart.
And the halls are there but resting,
From the sound of feast and revel;
And the polished floors are silent
Where the soldier's tread once sounded.
From its cupola no longer
Floats old Russia's royal banner,
And the light glows not that beckoned
Many an anxious crew to anchor
In the harbor, safe and peaceful.
Ladies' smiles and nobles' laughter
Mark no more the courtly presence
Of the guests and lordly master
Who, for years, were wont to gather
In the rooms, now coldly vacant.
Hushed and still, the castle watches
O'er the old forsaken houses
Dismally and surely sinking,
With no hand to stay their downfall,

None to care when all are tumbled
Into rough and useless rubbish !
For the people, sadly listless,
Have reduced to meagre numbers,—
White has blent with native savage,
Until each has lost his nature,
And the Creoles who are faithful
To their city's fading glory,
Only live in hopeless patience,
With no enterprise nor courage
To rebuild their falling dwellings,
Or resume the waves of traffic
That would soon restore old Sitka
To its place among the nations.
Still the castle guards the harbor,
Once alive with ships and sailors ;
Now, perhaps, a lonely vessel
Swings and sways within the current ;—
And it watches o'er the islets
That like glowing gems of verdure
Dot and deck the sound's fair surface ;
O'er the mountain crests and gorges,

O'er the old volcanic sentry,
Who will stand though Sitka trembles,
Sinks and falls—till braver spirits
See the future's smiling promise
And rebuild the falling city.
Until willing hands united
Raise again the "New Archangel,"
And once more its shores will echo
With the creak of masts and timbers.
At the sound of life the valleys
Shall send out a royal welcome,
In their blossoms blue and golden,
In their waving plumes of grasses.
Here the waves, with fishes teeming,
Hold a healthful, glittering harvest ;
While the mountain sides are traversed
By the game to sportsmen dearest.—
Deer and grouse in countless numbers
Roam among the brush and bramble,
And the waters tempt the wild-fowl
To display their varied plumage ;
Ducks and swans and noisy goslings

Splash and dive, and wake the welkin
With their loud, discordant clamor,
And the partridge calls and scurries
Through the leaves with startling rustle.
So with land so fair and verdant,
With rich food supplies abundant,
And with gold and silver veining
Rocky heights and sandy shallows,
Holding out a glorious harvest
Toward those brave enough to seek it,—
Sitka must not sink forever
Out of sight, of mind, and being !

ALASKAN NATIVE TRIBES.

AND this land so fraught with promise—
Teeming full of grandest beauty—
Bearing untold stores of fortune
Underneath its varied surface—
Long has held its hidden millions
For its own poor heathen natives.
Some, alas, how few the number !
Ages back received and cherished,
And they still hold fast the doctrines
Which the old Greek Church bestowed them ;
More, with souls all warped by witchcraft
And with threatening demon-worship,
Live like hunted beasts, in terror
Of some lurking danger waiting

GROUP OF NATIVE ALASKAN WOMEN.





To destroy them or to dog them
With persistent, vengeful venom !
Others, taking life more gayly,
Trust to spirits, good or evil,
Who with fateful power will bear them
To some place beyond life's border,
When or where they do not question.
Yet these soul-warped people ever
Live to rules firm set and guarded,
By which tribes and subdivisions
Know and hold the land assigned them,
Certain that the bold encroacher
Pays most sadly for his folly.
The Orarians take precedence,
Classed as Esquimaux or Innuits,
Dark Creoles, and sturdy Aleuts—
These hold close along the seaboard,
Claiming nearly all the coast-line
And the islands near adjoining ;—
Save where here and there the Indians
Have and hold small coast possessions,
Which they won by force or cunning.—

Living close beside the ocean,
These brave tribes fear not its raging,
But they face its foaming billows
Coolly daring, using mostly
Boats their own skilled hands have fashioned
From the skins of great sea-lions,
From the hides of seal or walrus,
Called Bidarras or Bidarkas,—
As their size and weight should warrant,—
Or canoes of graceful outline—
Light kyacks, that skim the water—
Made from logs of fragrant cedar,
Made from graceful trunks of cedar,
Which they scoop out smooth and neatly ;
Then they lash each end securely
And they fill the hollows, brimming
To the edge with sparkling water,
Therein plunging stones, so heated
That a cloud of steam arises.
In they throw them till the “dug-outs”
Can no longer hold another—
These they cover over closely,

Making steam the prisoned agent
In the work they wish accomplished.
By and by the trunks are pliant,
When they shape the boats by placing
Stays across, so finely graded
That the forms grow almost swanlike
In their slender, tapering outlines.
Dried and painted, carved and polished,
With some emblematic figures
At the prows to guide them safely,
Forth they dart with wondrous fleetness:
Light as down they ride the billows,
Holding safe the fearless boatmen,
Who with skilful strokes can guide them
Where the prey is fat and plenty.
These, with spears, and hooks, and bludgeons,
Aid the dauntless navigators
In their quest of fish or walrus,
Pondrous whales or soft-furred otter,
Which supply their food in season,
And their clothing, shoes, and vessels
Which they carve with strange devices,

But with skill and grace surprising.
All array themselves in garments
Made of skins their arts have taken—
And they fashion them for comfort,
Though with doubtful grace or beauty,
Save a few who deck the borders
Richly bright with quills and fringes,
Or with furs of varied shading,
Forming wraps grotesque and startling.
Some choose bird-breasts, bright and downy,
And combine with skins so deftly
That the feathers gleam like jewels
In the soft, fine fur imbedded.
While the Innuits carve and fashion
Tools and vessels, blades and axes,
With a skill and style, unrivalled
Save by talents trained and cultured,
Quietly the Aleut gathers
Grass and weeds and weaves them deftly
Into mats and tiny boxes,
Into fine, close-woven baskets,
That will hold and carry water,—

Baskets that are used as kettles
Into which hot stones drop hissing,
Seething, steaming, sputtering, singing,
Till the water boils and bubbles,
Just as though an iron caldron
Held it o'er a blazing furnace !
Full of talents, ripe and ready
For some guiding hands to polish
To a full and round completeness,
To most useful heights of culture ;
Still these people are repulsive
With their horrid taste in changing
Nature's work to savage notions
Of what constitutes true beauty ;
For some pierce their lips and spread them
With labrets, whose painful presence
They regard as most symmetric !
And their food ! how can we call it
By that name ! Their fearful dishes
Were unfit to cast for feeding
To our lowest, meanest creatures !
Putrid oil, whose faintest odor

Sweetest perfume could not smother !
Fish with fibres fast divorcing
From its bones, they treat as dainties,
While the moose and deer and walrus,
Fish and water-fowl and sea-fish,
Cooked or not, as suits convenience,
With no salt nor other flavor
Form their constant, yearly diet !
For their homes they make rude dwellings,
Mostly underground and dismal,
With no light but burning blubber,
With no pure, clear air for breathing;
And the only signs to know them
Are the mound-like roofs, grass-covered,
With one hole for smoke escaping
And another made for entrance.
Here they live, but make long journeys,
Hunting richest furs for traffic ;
Softest seal and costliest otter,
Warlus hides and tusks for ivory,
Whales for light and food and barter,
And for bones to roof their houses,

While great fishes without number
Come to keep in food the natives
Whose strange life we cannot fathom.
Next the Indian tribes hold province
Over all the inland portions,
And their war-like spirits keep them
Free from most marauding neighbors.
They are brave, courageous hunters,
Bold and reckless, daring fishers,
Wild and fierce when raised to battle,
But most abject in their terror
Of the spirits that surround them,
Of the witches and the demons,
Of the Shamans that can blast them,
Of the very air close swarming
With vile wraiths, forever watching
For some chance to do them evil !
Tinnehs, T'linkets, Hydahs, Chilkats,
Chilkoots, Tongas and some others,
With whose names, we cannot trifle,—
Hunt and fish and stand for bargains
Selling high and buying cheaply,

Showing, poor, benighted creatures,
Some slight, shadowy resemblance
To a race not quite so savage,
To a people fair and cultured !
Here again, born artists chisel,
With most wonderful designing,
Tools for work, and bowls and dishes
Cut from stones and wood and metal,
Bracelets wrought in graven silver,
Labrets, that claim admiration
As they hold their strange position
In the scarred, distorted visage
Of some favored village beauty.
And their lofty tribal totems
Carved in forms so weird and awful,
Graved in shapes so oddly fearful,
That uprise to prove the standing
Of the house by which they tower.
But of all their works none equal
In the texture and the finish,
In the fine and tempting softness,
And their oddly wrought designing,

Those gay bordered T'linket blankets,
Traced in colors bright or sombre,
Of the finest fleeces woven
And inwrought with totem figures,
Fringed and stained with dyes that rival
Persia's precious shades in beauty ;
Or some bleached to equal eider,
In their fluffy, snowy plumpness.
These are used as money value
In their many modes of traffic,
In their great, important potlatch,
And in sacrificial offerings
To the gods who need appeasing
For some fancied slight or insult.
Few or many, are cremated
With the dead who sadly need them
On their journey to the country
Where no blankets are provided.
They, with food and clothes are drifted
In the blaze of pines and spruces,
Far beyond the world's environs
To their ghost-land, vaguely distant.

All these tribes are subdivided
Into smaller tribes or classes,
Each regarding some wild creature
As its patron saint exclusive.
With great pride they place its image,
Carved or painted, stained or woven,
Upon all their strange belongings,
Adding beasts or birds or fishes,
When a woman joins their number,
As the marriage-rite makes lawful
That her badge should grace the totem
To her husband's class belonging.
Yet these women are but servants,
Bought and sold or vilely treated,
Forced to take beyond their bearing
Cruel pain past all believing,
And to toil while life permits it,
Lacking even beast-like comfort
In the hour of fiercest trial!
So they live, these darkened heathens
In the land so fair and lovely,
In the home of grandest landscapes,

Of sweet sounds and richest beauties,—
So o'erhung with superstitions,
So beclouded with rude customs
That the heart grows sick with longing
For the spirit light to wake them
From their long and dreary midnight,
From this cruel pagan darkness !

ALGÆ OF ALASKA.

AFTER storms have tossed the ocean
And old Bering's waves are troubled—
When the winds have whipped with fury,
Till the foamed and writhing breakers
Fling themselves in wild confusion
Far along the earth's environs,
Far across the beach that ripples
With the fierce, recoiling surges—
Walk along the shores and count them,
All those wondrous trunks and branches,
All the stems of kelp and mosses
That the rude sea-waves have gathered
From the deep, pellucid gardens
Down beneath the glossy waters.

There the long, bright trunks and streamers
Lie in heaps, all gaily mottled,
By the tints of leaf and tendril,
And anemones, still throbbing
With the life that soon must perish
When the sun's reflection strikes them,—
When the light and air have stolen
All their sea-born life and moisture.
See them now, a quivering parterre,
Spread along the sweeping sea-line ;
Orange, gold, and shades of purple,
Tender pink and glaring crimson—
There they lie as bright as blossoms,
And their slender threads move lightly
As the quivering, wind-touched stamens
Of the sweet-breathed water-lily
Touch them with a hand so gentle
That the down should not be ruffled
On a butterfly's frail plumage
If his gauzy wings had felt it—
And they shrink away and tighten
All their trembling, waving fingers,

That a moment since, were reaching
In such strangely searching fashion—
Close them tight and lie as quiet
As tho' stilled and closed forever !
Wait, and they will slowly open
And resume the nervous motion,
Till at last they die and wither,
Lacking ocean food and moisture.
Rosy "sea-squirts," pale "cucumbers,"
Asteroids and jelly-fishes,
Crabs with shells of green and azure,
Marked with sharp, deep crimson edges,
Lie in odd, uncouth positions,
Creep along the slippery windrows,
Eating holes in dying grasses
That have changed from green to yellow,
Dingy brown, and slimy blackness,—
All the colors mingling strangely,
Moving, too, in queer commotion
When a crab has noticed something
That will suit his roving fancy—
Or when some poor, shivering creature,

Longing for its native sea-home,
Makes a strong, but useless, effort
To regain the tempting waters.
All along the island beaches
Great sea-weeds in tangled masses
Pile in rifts as snow is drifted,
Here in hills, and there, like carpet,
Stretched along the sand, exposing
Plants, whose quivering life resemble
That of some bright flower or insect;—
Animals, like plants in motion—
Making rich, confusing pictures
For the traveller's wondering vision.
Off the coasts the kelp grows rampant,—
With its roots securely anchored
Fathoms deep, it stretches upward,
Coast-wise, when the tide is rising—
Floating out in tumbled streamers
When the ebb has left its branches
As a mark to show how daring
Was their late, but welcome visit.
In some parts it grows so densely

That its constant-moving branches
Form great rafts for seal and walrus
To enjoy their long siestas,
Or to sport upon, unmindful
How the waves are tossed and rippled.
Ships have found a barrier meet them
Where no rock nor shoal is sounded,
But where kelp and grasses matted,
Twist with each wild sweep and eddy
Till they grow as strong as hawsers
And the ship-keels cannot break them.
When the time of storm is over,
And these tons of moss all landed,
Natives seek the coasts and gather
Loads of such to use for fuel;
And their crackling fires gleam ruddy
With the storm-tossed ocean's tribute.
Birds collect the air-dried remnants
For their rude and careless nesting.
Hungry birds, in countless thousands,
Tear the sea-shell's slimy tenants
From their homes of pearl-like beauty,

Which the kelp's tenacious fingers
Have upborn from Neptune's chamber.
Fishes swarm in such profusion,
In among each floating store-house,
That a boat may load to sinking
Ere the poor, affrighted swimmers
Can escape the active fishers,
Who have watched, with hungry longing
For those dainty, fresh additions
To their scantily-furnished larders.
Thus the sea, whose various tempers
Ever hold unbounded revels—
Wage unceasing, reckless warfare
With the winds from Northern borders,
And from East and West, alternate—
Seems to sometimes grow remorseful
That its rage should lead to suff'ring,—
That poor human frames must perish
While it yields to wild indulgence
Of its rash, unbridled passion—
And it throws across his pathway
Food in fishes, birds, and mammals ;

Rafts, on which they float toward him,
Where his kyack could not battle
With the tumbling, tearing breakers ;
And supplies from out its lockers
Fuel, charged with heat as fervid
As the pine-tree's wood could furnish.
And, because no garden flora
E'er can cheer the stormy region,
Lovely tints and changeful shadings
Come from out the sea to tell him
Something of the world's bright store-house
And its teeming wealth of beauty.

FLORA IN ALASKA.

WHERE the pine trees rear their branches,
Where the spicy, healthful perfumes
Of a myriad fadeless needles
Waft themselves with every wind-breath,
Fling themselves in rich profusion,
Though no mortal feels the virtue—
Though the sweetness and the verdure
Win no voice of admiration,
And no grateful heart bounds lightly
In response to such a welcome :—
There the shaded mosses linger,
Spreading carpets, soft and springy,
That betray no wandering footsteps,
Though the tread be bold and heedless.

Round a blighted stump they nestle,
Touching here and there their rootlets,
Asking only room for foothold
If the wind should strike them rudely.
In return they grace its boldness
With festoons of gray-toned laces ;
While the sister mosses gather
At its feet in tiny hillocks,
Lifting up their cup-like blossoms—
Russet blooms, minute and perfect—
On their stems, so fine and slender,
That the faintest stir around them
Sets the timid flowers a-quiver,
Bends them down, but does not break them
For they toss their heads up gaily
When the breeze has touched and left them
Deep within the dark recesses
Of the weird, primeval forest
Mosses stand like mimic copses,—
Here and there a taller seedling
Looming high above its comrades,
Like a giant in the woodland.

Darkest green, relieved by shading
 Almost white, where tender patches
 Spread abroad to hide the remnants
 Of its neighbor, dead and withered,
 Make the pliant, mossy pathway
 Through the mystic wood so lovely,
 That it seems a stranger footstep
 Should not mar the simple beauty.
 Fear not, for those stems will humbly
 Sink beneath the instant pressure,
 And uplift again their leaflets
 Proudly as a lofty cedar !
 O'er the rudest rocks the sphagnum
 Creeps and spreads its wiry fibres,
 But its modest worth forbids it
 To assert itself too boldly ;
 So it threads its dainty net-work
 Over and around the rock-face,
 But its cool, gray shading always
 Looks so like the craggy surface
 That a close inspection only
 Can convince a doubting gazer,

Till he sees the trembling motion,
Like a photographed vibration,
Making every lacy leaflet
Rise and fall, in wavelike ripples,
If the gentlest winds but kiss it
On their way to distant valley,
Here and there a stony fastness,
Where no trees nor grass can flourish,
Blooms in richest shades of ochre,
Gold and bronze and purple tintings,
For the clinging lichens paint it
Till it seems a broken rainbow
Has been caught and firmly fastened
To the frowning crags and boulders.
Spruces wave their drooping pennons,
Each new tip of palest verdure
Resting on the darker greenness,
Like a graceful, tinted feather.
Down toward the mossy bedding
Branches droop, and sweep the seed-cones
Till they loose their tightened cases,
And the ripened seeds releasing

Send them on their wing-tipped mission.
Hemlocks toss their plumes, supplying
With their slender, ripened leaflets,
For the creeping vines and mosses
Tempting beds of restful fragrance.
Sometimes safe in sheltered places
Shadowy cedars, grow and flourish,
And their conelike heads point upward,
While their hearts refuse to hasten
From the earth that fed and brought them
To their sweet, but sombre beauty.
Stunted pines, with daring venture,
Climb the mountains' lofty summits,
Satisfied, if but a foothold
Gives to them the place of honor
Far above their stately brothers.
Apples grow, but hard and bitter
Is the fruit they give in payment,
For the noonday sun that warms them
For the rain that feeds their rootlets;
And their trunks grow rough and gnarly,
Though the winds but touch them gently,

As they pass to tell the wonders
Of their wild and icy birthplace.
Briars steal along the cliff-sides,
Stretch to catch unwary branches,
Wander in and out unquestioned
Over rocks and stony margins ;
Peering through the dark recesses
Of the long, untrampled jungles,
Where no foot of man has ever
Crushed the moss or torn the bramble—
Where no hand has ere unbended
To receive the purple berries,
That are hung in tempting clusters
Over brinks and rocky ledges,
Hidden under thorny thickets,
Nodding from the topmost leaf-sprays,
Or upon the ground lie bursting
With their weight of ripened juices.
Strawberries, with pale, shy blossoms,
Hide away in sheltered corners
And, when tiny fruit is ripened,
Clasp it close beneath their leaflets,



PRIMEVAL FOREST.



As if loath to let its beauty
Tempt some eager hand to gather
And to test the promised sweetness.
Whortleberries, bold and gracious,
Reach their tinted fruit, inviting
Every passer-by to cull them,
And enjoy Alaskan bounty.
Cranberries, with rosy blushes,
Tempt the feet to tread the tangle
Where they hold, with stunted maple,
And with nodding plumes of alder,
Undisturbed and free possession
Of the rich and oozy marshes.
Fallen trunks of forest monarchs,
Dead themselves, supply nutrition
To a myriad vines and bushes,
Mosses, lichen, tiny tree-tops,
That will sometimes stride their root-tips
Either side the stricken tree-stems,
Living monuments erecting
To the silent, lifeless cedars,
To the pines and balmy spruces,

Holding tender, requiem music
In their young and sturdy branches
And diffusing softest shading
Lest the sunlight fall too brightly.
Grasses grow in rich profusion,—
Tall and stately plumes upraising
As they toss their tiny seed-pods
Far and wide across the valley,—
Looking as they bend and flutter
Like a field of snowy feathers ;
Or, they creep along the margins
Of the bays and inland channels,
Spreading richly verdant carpets
Close beside the gleaming waters,
Dipping, now and then, their leaf-points
Till their emerald brightness touches
Here and there the yellow sea-moss
As it waves and stretches landward
With the tide, whose ebb and flowing
Bids it wave and toss forever !
Fields of heather, gayly studded
With the blooms of phlox and gentian—

Phlox, in white and rosy shading ;
Gentians, softly blue and purple ;—
Saxifrage, with tiny blossoms,
Bunched in heads of downy beauty,
Touched with pencil tips of color
Underneath their bristling stamens,
Nod and dance as winds run races
Through the clumps of moss and heather.
Here and there a stately iris
Throws its flag to catch the breezes,
Who betray the dark blue veinings
Of the modest inner petals.
Mustard lifts its spicy yellow,
Bold and bright, in striking contrast
To the timid chickweed blossom,
Or the violet, shyly hidden
Underneath some fallen tree-leaves,
Or a bramble's trailing tendrils.
Gay nasturtiums flaunt their splendor,
Though no eye should e'er behold them,
Seeming to delight in spreading
Painted leaves and subtle perfume

To the breezes, who may carry
Where they will, the fairy burden.
Dandelions' sunny faces
Smile above their spreading leaf-pads ;
And angelica, so stately,
Holds its stalks above the earth-mould,
Catching in its myriad petals
Spicy juices, sweet and wholesome.
There a field of graceful poppies
Bow their golden heads demurely,
Fling them back in gleeful rapture,
Toss them this and that way, gayly,
As the winds in joyful frolic
Through their slender branches wander.
Fungi, scarlet, purple, pallid,
With a hue of death upon them,
Spring above, and hide the ashes
Which has furnished all their fibres
With their life, their strength, their color !
Mushrooms break the mould, and grace it
With their knobs as white as snow-drift,
While beneath their gills they carry

Softest tints of pink and purple,
And the puff-balls ape their beauty,
But betray themselves when opened,
By the dust and germ-life hidden
In their pale, deceitful centres.
Everywhere that root can fasten,
Or that tendril-tip can enter,
Pulses with the life of something,
Be it plant, or tree, or blossom,
While the summer holds its regent
O'er these fair Alaskan islands.

BIRDS OF ALASKA.

FAR above the pines and cedars
Where no tree nor leaf can flourish,
On the roughest crags and mountains
Dwells the eagle, boldly nesting
Where the rudest winds may revel,
Where the sun his fiercest torches
Casts across his vision daily,
While he looks in careless patience
At the rise and fall of greatness,
Which is ever thrown before him,
As the sun rides forth in glory
And departs in dusky shadows.
Down he swoops, when hunger bids him,
Or when nestlings call attention

To the bleaching bones, which hold not
Food for such imperial gourmands.
Over hills he sails and watches
For a lamb, whose fleecy tangle
In his talons held securely,
Makes his life a ready offering
To the greedy birds in waiting ;
Or a kid, one moment bounding
On the mountain side, then bleating
Far above its mother's vision,
Tells the story of his hunting ;
Or perhaps he robs the water
Of some silver-tinted fishes,
And then, screaming, flapping, soaring,
Homeward turns to sit and ponder
On the earth so strangely blended,
Of such bright and useless beauty,
Of such wasteful tracks of verdure,
And his own most noble station—
Far above all other bird-life—
Far above man's low dominion !
Croaking ravens preen their plumage,

Near the doorsteps, on the pathways,
Wander where they list, not mindful
Whether man or beast is nigh them ;
For their sacred reputation
Keeps them safe from every danger.
Swallows skim the crystal streamlets,
Tip their wings along the heather,
Twitter busily, but softly,
Near their nests beneath the ledges,
Call their young with anxious voices,
Watching tenderly their efforts
When at first they spread their pinions
Timidly, then braver growing,
Venture forth in quest of insects,
Or to feel the joyous rapture
Of a pure and free existence.
Note the ptarmigan's low calling,
As it goes from hills to hedges,
Flying low and swiftly, running
Underneath the weeds and bushes,
Peeping out in timid wonder
If a sound disturbs the quiet,

And then lying closely silent
Till all danger has departed,
Leaving it to call its comrades
Who had scattered when the bushes
Rustled with a footfall's sounding,
Or the wind too loudly blowing.
Here and there, a tiny bunting,
Telling of the snow-crowned summits
In the icy north-wind's province,
Flutters close enough to gather
Crumbs that may have dropped and scattered,
And then hies away, not thinking
Of the lesson it has wafted
In its short, confiding visit.

Whale-birds bring a welcome message
To the Mah-le-moot, whose longing
Finds a hope almost a surety
Of the food he needs for winter,
When he sees the bird approaching
And he hears its note of warning.
When he sees the bird he hastens
To the shore and waits and watches

Till the waters roll and ripple,
Till the prey comes near and nearer,
Then his sharp harpoon he buries
Deep within the monster's vitals,
And awaits the time of safety
To secure the precious sea-prize,
Which he shares in willing favor
With the bird who lingers near him,
Knowing that some dainty morsel
Will reward his patient waiting.
Flocks of geese, with swift-winged leaders,
Rend the air with piercing screeches,
As they fly toward the islands
Where their young can grow in safety ;
Where no fox nor lynx can bury
In their necks their cruel teeth-points,
Nor affright them from their nest-place
Until eggs are cold and lifeless.
Arries flock in countless thousands
On the rocks of treeless islands,
Where the natives follow, taking
From their midst the eggs that give them

Valued wares for gain or commerce,
Or as food, both rich and wholesome.
Auks, in quaint and homely fashion,
Stand and contemplate the ocean,
Waddle close beside the wave-line,
And then hustle, plunge and scramble
Back again, to taste at leisure
Of the fish they catch so deftly
That they rarely need two efforts
To obtain a scale-bright dinner.
Screaming gulls, like falling snow-storms,
Land in flocks along the sea-shore,
Wander far beyond the breakers,
And return to rest and nestle
Where their feeble young are waiting
For their time of swift departure
On those glorious, free-winged journeys !
And the welcome "choochkies" linger
Near enough for men to gather
Hundreds of their tempting bodies
In such nets as serve for fishing,
Furnishing such dainty tid-bits

As an epicure should envy.
And the noisy, chattering sparrows *
Make short, periodic visits
To the loneliest, weirdest islands,
Daunted not, though each migration
Shows their numbers sadly lessened,
And the flocks, reduced by thousands,
Turn again to climes more genial,
Leaving plump and tender comrades
To regale the Aleut palate,
While the bones of more lie bleaching
On the dreary, sunless beaches.

* See Note in Appendix.

A HUMMING-BIRD IN SITKA.

WHENCE it comes it cannot tell you,
Though you ask it low and earnest,
Though you think by tender phrases
You may win the thrilling story
Of its travels from the south-land—
From the land where balmy breezes
Toss the perfume-laden blossoms
Till their breath is full of sweetness
Stolen from the blooms of locust,
From the starry, yellow jasmine,
From the tender, pallid beauty
Of the groves of palm and orange.
You may hope to hear some message,
Though it be so faintly spoken

That your ear must form the sentence.
From the fitful, dreamy whispers
That the tiny bird will murmur
To the flowers it seeks and rifles,—
That it robs of liquid amber,
While it hovers, humming softly,
Bearing on its quivering pinions
Tints of bronze and gold it gathered
From the sunsets, from the sun-glow
That smiled on it as it fluttered
In and out among the bloom-stalks
Of those distant sunny gardens.
It has come, and like a fairy's
Is the form that seldom wearies,
Are the wings that hold it lightly
Near enough to gain the sweetness,
From each blossom's dainty chalice,
Far enough from leaf and branches
To avoid the slightest tarnish
That their rougher touch would fasten
If it tossed the tinted feathers
Of the wings, the jeweled forehead,

Or the throat with silver frosting.
Yet this living gem has wandered
Over miles of sun-ripe meadows,
Over fields of clover, nodding
With the weight of richest nectar;
Over mountain ranges, girding
Valleys decked with billowy grasses,
Spangled here and there with tassels—
Blossom tassels—pink and purple,
Softly gray and misty yellow,
Bending as the wind speeds o'er them.
Springing upright, flaunting gayly,
All their small, sun painted banners.
Over streams whose timid murmur
Scarce would drown its own soft calling,
Or above great, dashing rivers
Hastening to entomb their waters
In the ocean's restless surges.
How it came? Perhaps it wandered
On and on where flowers are sweetest,
Listing not how far they tempted,
Till it lost its homeward reckoning,

Gave itself to full enjoyment
Of the strange, new scenes unfolding
As it journeyed toward the northland,
Toward the land where storms are brooded,
Where pale Nature pauses, awe-struck,
At the power the ice-wind carries
On its great, cloud-darkened wing-tips,—
At the spotless sheathes it fastens
Over all the verdant structures
That her eager hand had builded,
While the sun's gay smile deluded,
While his kisses warmed the spirits
Of the myriad plants and seed pods
That she held toward his brightness
In her sweet confiding manner.
On it flew, its heart elated
With its rare untrammeled freedom,
While its tireless wings upbore it
Light as down by breezes lifted.
But it paused not where the ice-king
Holds his court in gelid grandeur,
But a garden spot espying

Hid among the snow-capped mountains,
Fanned by winds whose air is tempered
By the soft winged Kura-siwo.
Thence it sped, by hunger hurried,
For it looked in vain for blossoms,
When it reached the belt of silence
In the glacier's fair dominions,
And it found such honeyed fragrance
In the dark green fields of Sitka,
Where the clear sound-waters answer
To the balmy zephyrs sighing,
Where the mists fall softly downward
And the verdure springs to meet them,
And the blossom buds swell quickly
Into perfume-laden beauty ;
That it lingered, culling sweetness
In return for tender music.
Wakened by its quivering wing-tips
And the gentle winds that vibrate
To the swift, unnumbered time-beats ;
And the slender body wanders
Out and in among the grasses,

Up and through the drooping branches
Of the spruce and hemlock sprouting
Into richer, grander statur
As the summer lingers near them.
Now it clasps a twig so slender
That its pulse-beats make it tremble,
While it rests and smoothes its plumage,
Gazing round in joyous wonder
At the oasis of beauty
It has found so far to northward
Of the home it left behind it,
When it started forth to travel
With no chart but joy to lead it,—
When it saw fresh bloom to greet it
Whereso'er its wings were guided.—
It has found in dark Alaska
Blossoms sweet as southern flow'rets,
Honey, pure as golden nectar
From the azure horns of larkspur,
From the lips of rose and lily,
Or the hearts of daisies opened
To the sunlight, to the breezes,—

To the swift, short moment visits
Of its far less daring comrades,
In the home so fair and distant—
In the home beyond the ice-zone,
Far away across the channels
Where no sea-voice makes the echoes
On the mountain-chains and hill-tops,
Where the lovely night is silent,
Save that now and then a bird-voice
Or a nimble-winged cicada
Makes a note or two, then settles
Into restful, peaceful, quiet.

INDIAN RIVER.*

SITKA'S beauty stands unquestioned;
But how soon her grace would vanish,
All her bright green radiance wither
And become as dust and ashes,
Were it not for gracious moisture,
Sent in mists and silvery rain-drops !
And how soon her slow-lived people
Would forget to live—or scatter
Far away from Sitka valley,
Far away from Edgecumbe's shadow,
Were it not for one sweet river—
One pure, rippling stream—whose waters
Bear to man and beast refreshment;

* See Note in Appendix.



INDIAN RIVER, NEAR SITKA.



While it hides away unconscious
Of its clear and gentle fairness,
Of its sweet, transparent beauty—
As the violet, whose sweetness
Breathes among the fallen oak-leaves—
As a song-bird seeks a covert
When its heart, brimful of rapture,
Causes every nerve to quiver
With a vibratory motion,
While its voice rings out with gladness
Full of clear accentuations,
Joyful trills, and soulful music!
So this stream enfolds its brightness
Under leafy boughs and branches,
Under slender vines and shadows,
Thrown protectingly around it
By the trees whose roots are nourished
With the cool and limpid water.
And the roots return thanksgiving
In the panoply of verdure
That protects its rippling surface
From the sun's too ardent glances,

From the winds, who fain would carry
Clouds of mist from off its bosom
And dispense them widely, thoughtless
Of the prodigal diffusion !
And its silvery voice forever
Tinkles clearly, where the pebbles
Hold themselves against the ripples ;
Or it murmurs sweet cadenzas
To the moss-grown stones beneath it,
Swelling out in louder carols
Where the shelving rocks and boulders
Fain would stay the limpid current ;
Falling then to tender whispers
That the trembling fern-leaves only
May discern while drooping lightly
Toward their slender, dark reflections.
Then it turns in whirling eddies
Round the points of stones, all shattered,
Or it stops awhile in silence,
Where its shallow bed is deeper,
Forming smooth, pellucid mirrors,
Pure and bright as polished crystal.

On it flows, through fen and hollow,
Under spreading trees, with sunshine
Breaking through in golden patches ;
On, still on, as though its mission
Touched its heart with sweet compassion
And compelled its tide to hasten
Toward the hands, that hold beside it
Pails of modern form and fabric ;
Bowls, all decked with totem emblems ;
Baskets closely wove and swollen
Until no bright drop is wasted
Once within their care entrusted ;
Cups of horn, and kettles chiselled
From the stones around the door-ways,—
These and more, are daily carried
Through the town toward the river,
And the river turns toward them,
As they're plunged beneath its surface,
Filling all to overflowing
With its clear, life-giving fluid.
Then it ripples on, still singing
In its way toward the channel,

Under rudely rustic bridges,
Over tiny, pebbly beaches ;
Spreading out in broad expanses
And then shrinking closely, holding
Round its banks the ferns and grasses
That delight to lend their shadows
For the streamlet's decoration.
As it nears the final closing
Of its pure, undimmed existence,
Swift it speeds, that gleaming current,
Fair and sweet its smiles and dimples,
And its every wave looks brighter
As it leaves its banks to mingle
With the channel's deeper waters.



BRIDGE OVER INDIAN RIVER, SITKA.



ALASKAN MARRIAGE.

In the lip a pin inserted,
With the blunted point projecting,
Marks the maiden who is ready
To become a willing helpmate
For some chief, or humble siwash,—
To improve his lonely dwelling
With her constant, faithful presence;
Bear his burdens, weave his blankets,
Cook his fish and dry the berries,
Carry home his load of fishes—
If the season is successful—
Dry his salmon, hang his deer meat,
Pitch his tent of skins and fleeces,
And withal to bear his children,

Who, if girls, among some natives,
Are despised, abused and often
Murdered with a cool intention ;
Sometimes, by the cringing mother,
Who, with aching heart, would rather
See them dead, than live and suffer
As she does with helpless patience !
When a man has met a maiden
Whom he thinks will fairly suit him,
To her home he sends a message,
Telling of his will toward her,
Calmly waiting for the answer,
Which is sure to meet his wishes,
Unless higher hopes are centred
In the girl, because of beauty,
Or of greater wealth in prospect
From another waiting suitor.
If he gains the hoped for answer
Presents, rich as he can offer,
He bestows upon the parents,—
Gathers all that he can muster
In exchange for this fair daughter.

Then a wedding time is settled :
When it comes he seeks the cabin
And he sits demurely waiting
With his back toward the door-way.
Presently the girl's relations,
Who have met the rites to witness,
Sing a marriage-song with spirit,
Shouting out the merry chorus,
While some calico and seal-skins,
Or, perhaps, the skins of otter
Are disposed upon the door-sill ;
And the girl who, from the corner,
Listened to the joyous singing
And beheld the way her footsteps
Were to cross toward her lover—
Silently is led across them,
Led across the cloth and fur-skins,
And then seats herself beside him.
Neither speaks nor turns to notice,
But they sit in sober silence,
Joining not in songs and dances,
Though the friends and guests invited

Eat and drink and sing till weary,—
Dance and shout until the welkin
Rings again with sounds and voices !
Then they rest, and sober fasting
For a day or two prepares them
For a meal, but plain and scanty,
Followed by another pastime
And another season's revel,
Which the maid may not indulge in
And the suitor dare not enter.
Then they part, the girl is taken
And secluded from all notice,
While the man, his home preparing,
Waits the time of his probation,
During which he may be tempted
By another maiden charmer,
And may cancel his betrothal,
Punished not by maid nor parent.
But the maiden dare not utter
One complaint against the lover ;
She is his to take or leave her—
She is his to hold for life-time—

Or, if wearied of her presence,
He can send her back, demanding
Every portion of his purchase!
In the time by law appointed,
Forth the bridegroom issues, painted,
Finely dressed in fur or blanket,
And demands his bride to follow
Where his will has made her dwelling.
Likely she is highly favored
As the first wife of her master,
Or she may be watched with hatred
By another dark companion—
Two of these may scowl upon her,
Frightening much the trembling creature
Who has never dared to show it
If she loves or hates her husband.
Or a month or two may follow
Ere she finds another mistress
Brought to share with her the keeping
Of the lordly master's riches.
She may work till worn and weary,
She may suffer—that is nothing—

So the master does not feel it,
So he's never incommoded
Or his sovereign power contested !
When she entered at the door-way
From her lip the pin was taken
And a graven labret twisted
In the hole the pin had opened ;
This is proof above all others
That she is no more a maiden,
That her very soul is entered
In the husband's own possessions.
Year by year he moves the labret
And inserts a larger carving,
Each, in turn, defacing further
All the features of the wearer,
Making of the mouth an object
Far from beautiful or comely,
Drawing down the cheeks and eyelids
And exposing teeth that darken
With decay or age's footprints.
Ah, how soon the maiden changes
To a worn and weary woman !

Bearing loads that make her totter
And abuse that sears and blackens
Both the heart and trembling body.
How she holds her children near her,
Strapped upon her back, which, bending,
Bows her form as years develop
Tiny babe to sturdy urchin.
Sometimes kindness makes her willing
Thus to serve the one who owns her ;
But more likely stern compulsion
Turns the wife to gloomy servant.
Older grown, her charms so lessened
Make neglect the common portion,
And the younger force upon her
Greater toils and longer journeys.
Jealous hatred may consume her
When she sees a younger rival
Boasting of the gifts that lately
Were her own, as near as ever
Wife can hold a gift or portion.
But she dare not utter protest,
Lest her flesh should feel the burnings

Of a brand picked from the hearth-stone,
Or a blow that bleeds and festers,
Scarring heart as well as body.
So she lives—a dreary subject
Of this savage form of marriage—
Faithful, until death releases
From its weight of wrong the spirit
That goes forth, alone and helpless,
O'er the dark and gruesome waters
That may lead to fields of beauty,
Or may bear her on forever—
Seeing rest she cannot enter
In the dim, uncertain distance!

TOTEMS.

WHERE these dark Alaskan people,
Great Alaska's Indian natives,
Build their homes of forest monarchs,
Cut in slabs and fitted neatly,
Bound and closely joined together
Without nail or spike to hold them—
Some have marked their special totems—
Carved in wood their tribal emblems—
So they call the strange devices
By which tribes and clans and families
Designate their odd belongings—
And have placed them on the panels,
On the planks that form their houses,
As a sign to all who enter

That the house and all its fittings,
Which display the chosen figures,
Are the sole and true possessions,
Property with legal title,
Of the chief, or lawful master
Of the family, whose dwelling
Thus upholds its rank and title.
Others, it may be their talents
Are not quite so well developed,
Are content to show their ensign
On a pole, which stands as guardian
By the door, or rather, entrance.
Questions, bold and oft repeated—
Cunning questions deftly handled,
Sly, insinuating questions—
Fail to gain a truthful knowledge
Of a custom so peculiar;
Fail to find the first-born reason
For those quaint and wondrous carvings
That are held exclusive 'scutcheons
Which may not, be counterfeited,
Nor repeated by another,

Unless marriage or promotion
Grants the power to grave the emblem
With the one or more belonging
To the favored chief or suitor.
Are these idols? One can scarcely
Grace them with a name so sacred.
For 'twould test a soul artistic
To find aught of heavenly beauty,
Aught of earth's most strange productions,
Or of subterranean monsters,
Quite so oddly shaped or featured,
Half so weirdly bound together!
Are these people low descendants
Of a greater race of mortals
Who have, ages back, been shipwrecked
On these new-world shores and islands?
Have their grand, heraldic tokens,
Both in name and form perverted,
Graven by inferior sculptors,
Grown degenerate as the ages
Handed them from mother sponsors
Down to uncouth, careless scions?

Who, for lack of gentle culture,
Grew from year to year more savage,
Until every trace has vanished
Of the parent country's language,
Of its features and complexion?
All have gone and left us nothing
But a labyrinth of notions,
But a field of wild conjecture
That may find Egyptian atoms
Floating from the carver's knife point.
Or behold Japan-like eyelids
Drooping over eyes, whose lustre
May have caught its brightest glitter
From some dark Mongolian optics;
Or mayhap, these monster totems
Are but witch and elf exorcists.
For the fiend of superstition,
Never held a stronger fortress,
Never boasted slaves more abject,
Than these Indian tribes, who people
Sea and air and earth and future
Thick with spirits, fierce, vindictive,

And with cruelty too dreadful
To be mentioned or out-spoken !
After all, the startling figures
May be works of art, long cherished,
As we hold a shattered torso,—
As we prize a rare old painting,
Peeled and scarred, yet still displaying,
To an artist's eyes, rare beauty.—
To a soul art-cultivated,
Gems of worth the wild Alaskan
Would behold with eyes astonished
At the taste which held such rubbish
As more grand and highly valued
Than his bold and lofty carvings !
Sometimes through these totem figures
Darts a streak of comic humor,
That would seem to show intention,
But, too soon, 'tis lost in wonders,
Senseless eyed, and stolid visaged ;
Or with shapes as rudely fashioned
As an infant's first progression
Toward a house or trotting pony.

Bowls are marked with hideous faces
Opened-mouthed and grinning fiercely—
Rather strange, an invitation
To partake of crimson berries
Floating in a sea of blubber !
Blankets, whose inviting softness
Wooes the ice-chilled frame to comfort,
Glare about with eyes wide open,
Or, with sidelong glances, threaten
While an axe, or knife, or fish-hook
Waits to twine in subtle fibres
Round the limbs and pulsing vitals.
And these totems, re-repeated,
Show through every master's household
As a seal with stamp and ribbon
Marks the haughtiest king's possessions.
View a Hydah totem graven
In the stones, a monumental
And most dignified construction.
From its base eyes stare upon you,
Lidless eyes, which lack expression,
While above them sits his bearship,

Holding out his paws serenely,
To uphold the feet of something
That bestrides his back, and bending,
Holds its chin in cool complaisance
On its hands, half clinched and resting
On the bear's most noble forehead ;
While upon its back this other—
Whether beast or whether human—
Holds a figure truly manlike
With some trophy of his prowess
Slung across his lifted shoulder.
Here a shaft is gravely freighted
With a head, whose jaws spread open,
Form a doorway to the dwelling
Which it marks with lofty stature.
Next above the face outspreading
Is a mask, a staring bird's head,
And a face with rays surrounding
That must mean to hold resemblance
To the morning sun uprising.
Next another leering mask-face,
Overtopped with scrolls and circles,

Which support an owl, whose judgeship
Stands confessed by all beholders,
As he sits in wise reflection,
Noting not the staring stranger,
Heeding not the world's wild tumult,
But in carven, stolid grandeur,
Overcasting humbler totems
With his grace's stately presence !
There's an eagle's head, upholding
On its brow a chieftain's figure.
Here, a shaft all smoothly shapen,
With no crest except an owlet,
Gazing round in staring wonder
On poor, foolish man's condition.
See that stick, with nose protruding,
And an object like a foolscap,
Both of which make odd suggestions
Of a Punch and Judy pattern ?
But that nose must be a spear-hook,
And the cap, on close inspection,
Proves to be a whale, whose body
Had not strength to hold its burden,



TOTEM POLES, FT. WRANGEL.



Great with eyes, and teeth sufficient
To surprise an eager hunter
For great mastodonic relics :—
So the head has tilted forward
O'er the brow that bears it nobly !
There, an eagle screams defiance
From its outlook at the doorway,
While a raven, grandest totem !
Highest tribe-mark of those nations !
Holds its own through wind and weather,
With its neck outstretched, and pinions
Ready to swoop down and punish
One who dares defy his kingship !
Bears, supporting men and bird-shapes,
Stand beside a bear recumbent
On a pole whose sides are dented
With small feet-marks, oft-repeated.
There a wolf is bounding onward,
Howling as he smells his quarry,—
Massive whales, with eyes more human
Than some eyes that beam in faces,
Gaze about from strange positions

On men's heads or from their shoulders,
And display such even beauty
In the teeth they force to notice
As no mammal in the water
E'er before could boast in owning !
Fishes, frogs, birds, beasts and mankind,
All in heathenish confusion,
Top and overcap each other
With the most grotesque arrangement,
That would seem to rise from adding
To the crest, already graven,
Each new totem as it enters
With no thought of graceful outline,
Nor of how absurdly builded
Are the sticks they prize so highly !
All these poles are made to outlook
O'er the sea or nearest river.
Is it that they trust protection
From the fearful fate of drowning,
Lies within the staring eyeballs
Of those sightless totem figures ?
When they paint their dark canoe-prows

With some one of these devices
Does it mean they trust their safety
To that image, strange and senseless ?
On their graves, or close beside them,
Crouch these totems, weird as spectres,
Waiting to give out the signal
Of an enemy's approaching,
Or as scarecrows, meant to frighten
All the evil-minded witches
Who with fell design might scatter
To the wind these sacred ashes !
All the tribes are finely graded
By the nature of their totems :
Ravens, crows, and all winged creatures
Mark the higher chieftain's 'scutcheons,
While the frogs and fishes enter
As the lower classes' ensigns.
Yet the graven poles expose them
Strangely mixed for such distinction,
Which must come from noble natives
Wedding humbler wives, whose tribe-marks
Added, make the lower creature

Rest upon its mighty rival.
Thus we leave them ; some historian
May arise from out the darkness
And unearth some hidden archives
That our eyes could not decipher,
And explain a wondrous meaning
That will awe us with its grandeur,
Or compel our admiration
With its child-like, tender meaning !
While we hope the gentler teachings,
That fair Freedom sends to greet them
May direct the shadowed genius
Into fields of brilliant knowledge,
And produce from hands so gifted
Gems well worth our Union's wearing.

ALASKAN DOCTORS.

If a woman dreams her infant,
Yet unborn, contains the spirit,
Or will in some day in future
Hold the essence of a Shaman,
From its birth the tiny creature
Is not common with its fellows,
But is held in sacred reverence,—
Looked upon with eyes of wonder,
And with jealous care so guarded
That no fateful interference
May impair its coming greatness,—
That no witch, with foul intention,
Shall destroy the germs of greatness
Which has found its future dwelling

In the child so plainly chosen.
So is looked upon and cherished,
One whose locks are auburn tinted,
Or whose hair is black but curling.
Each of these three signs is certain,
Showing, with no doubt attending,
That some dying doctor's mantle
Has descended, and is resting
On the head of one so singled ;—
Marked with signs of its profession
So decidedly, no question
Ever rises to defraud it
Of the training and the honors
Due to such a noble calling !
For the Shaman holds position
Second to no other office,
Even chieftains paying deference
To the might of those, whose will-power,
Direful, strange and quite mysterious,
Calls a spirit back to earthward,
If some playful witch's charming
Has not doomed the suffering patient

To the long and lonely journey
Which the trembling soul must travel
Ere it lands in endless safety
Far beyond the angry waters!
With its birth the future Shaman
Starts at once upon the training
Which befits its destined station.
So its hair is never shortened,
Nor the locks with comb distorted—
But as nature bids them prosper,
So they grow in curls and crinkles,
Waved and twisted as the fingers
Of the teasing winds entwine them—
Massed and matted, woven closely
With the restless dreamer's tossing.—
With the hard, unyielding pillow
Pressed to fit the head so closely
That its growth is greatly stunted,
And it hangs in stiffened masses,
Tangled, lustreless, uncleanly.
So it stays. A strange diploma,
Hideous rival of the parchment

In whose loss a budding doctor
Loses all that fame had promised ;
For a student, once dismantled
Of the hair that made him sacred,
Stands forlorn, a common mortal,
Scorned as one whose term at college
Ends in ignominious failure !
Those that honored now despise him,
And he never more may enter
In the race he seemed so fitted,
By the sign of birth, for winning.
But 'tis seldom even witches
Have the hardihood, the daring,
To deface the special object,
To destroy the hope so centered
In the youth whose hair is curly,
Or with reddish tints o'ershadowed.
Every tribe has certain spirits,
Guarding, guiding and tormenting—
So each doctor makes selection
For his own peculiar trade-mark,
Of some mighty, great immortal ;

While a troop of scowling demons,
Marked in masks and hideous noises,
Paints of black and red, and powder,
Made to burn with light so vivid
That its rays may pierce the darkness
Far beyond poor mortal vision ;
Eagles' down and great quill feathers
Form the wings of crow and raven,
Slender wands of bone or ivory,
Drums bedecked with paint and tassel,
And, beyond all else, great rattles
Carved and formed in various figures,
Make the form of pharmaceutics
That a Shaman's art finds needful
For a sick Alaskan's healing.
All good spirits never enter
In the songs and incantations,
For their very nature proves them
Harmless, needing no appeasing.
But the demons, always darting
Here and there on hurtful mission,
Must be feasted, fed and fattened,

Must be called with rattles, sounding
Each his own peculiar keynote—
For no fiend will deign to answer
To another's call, however
Loud and long a drum may vibrate,
Or a rattle break the stillness !
As the student's age advances,
Doctors of the tribe secure him,
And begin their course of training,
That will lead to wealth and honor.
Some are cannibals so hideous
That their very features frighten
Ere they change their grim expression
Into grins and stares revolting ;
While they goad their unclad pupil
To a wild, fanatic frenzy—
Prancing like a haughty war-horse,
With his arms outstretched and jerking,
While his tangled locks toss wildly
By his odd, ungainly motions.
When he finds a corpse provided,
Horribly he tears and rends it

With his teeth and nails, and swallows
With a seeming taste and relish,
Portions of the reeking body
Till his beastly will is sated !
Then he rushes where the demon
Which possesses him may lead him,
In and out among his people,
On the house-tops, in the chambers,
Round about, till wearied nature
Forces him to travel homeward,
Where the staring crowd who follow,
Who have watched him, wild with wonder,
May not dare to see the finish
Of that awful, fiendish lesson !
Dare not look upon the features
Ghastly in exhausted slumber !
Other tribes eat dog, for practice
No less hideous, but that nature
Has not quite the fearful horror
When 'tis limbs of brute that furnish
Such a meat for such a creature !
Tribes there are in greater number

Who despise such hateful teaching,
Who content themselves with screaming,
Calling on each evil genius
Whose fierce hate they wish to temper,
With the wildest, strangest dances,
With the most uncouth distortions,
Limb and feature-twisting movements,
And a din of hellish jargon
Made with drums and rattle-shaking,
Made with clubs whose downward crashing,
Bids the hollow space around them
Quiver with a queer pulsation,
Which they call the living pressure
Of the fiend they wish to conjure!—
All these sounds, with masks of ravens,
Beasts and fishes, large and wicked,
Or with faces meant as pictures
Of the mighty, ghostly beings
Who reside in wood and water,
In the air, the fire, the totems—
Everywhere, with naught to still them
From their mean, vindictive malice,

But the Shaman's, those predestined
To contend with all the terrors,
And protect the tribes from damage—
All these masks and signs and noises
Join to bring the willing student
To the very sure perfection
Of a scholar and physician !
Of the herbs they use, no mortal
May expect to hear the virtues,
Nor the names, nor where they flourish,
For if one were known to follow,
When a Shaman goes to find them—
Goes to seek the healing foliage,
Or the roots with physic teeming—
Or should gaze upon a Taamish,
In his time of holy fasting
And concocting life elixirs,
Death alone would meet the felon
By the hands of those he followed,
Or by one who knew the villain
Had so dared defile the precincts
Wholly sacred to the doctors

Who are versed in arts of healing.
Yes, although it were a brother,
He should die to keep securely
All the secrets of the Order!
When a patient needs attention,
And the doctor comes in answer
To the call that bids him follow,
Ere the fiends have sprung beyond him,
And the witches doomed the victim.
There he stands, his arts concealing,
And a stubborn, eager shadow
Lurking in his starting eyeballs,
In his greedy, grasping fingers.
And he will not even favor
With a glance the suffering creature
Till his fee is laid in blankets
Or in costly furs or silver
At his feet, that never waver
Till his pay is his most surely.
Then he leans above the patient,
With his staring eyelids moving
Till his eyes with queer expression

Seem to roll in quick gyrations
And his gleaming teeth look ready
To devour the cringing figure !
Now he takes some down of eagles,
Holds it near the patient's forehead,
And then blows it far above him,
Thus to chase the evil spirit
That has touched the fevered body.
Ha ! it does not do, he seizes
And adorns his face distorted
With a mask, most truly frightful,
And he screams, and bangs and batters
At his drum and hollow rattles,
Calls the spirit by its title,
Burns red powder, shouts and jabbers !
Then, when worried out, he gazes
In the sick man's face to question
If the demon who had seized him
Had not left, appeased and silent.
No. The fever still is raging,
And the patient, strange the telling,
Does not seem the least recovered !

So he waits another offering
Of the soft and cosy blankets,
Dons another grinning mask-face,
Changes rattles, drums and potions,
And begins a din so frightful
That the last was tender music
When compared with all this clatter!
Unsuccessful still, he changes
Till his wiles are all exhausted,
And the tortured sufferer threatens
To depart without delaying.
Knowing well his doom is certain,—
For his life must pay the forfeit
If his arts have been deceptive
And death ends his cruel treatment.—
Suddenly he finds that witchcraft
Has been played upon the patient;
And for blankets, fine and costly
He will find the witch's dwelling,
Find the form that holds the witch's
And redeem himself by dooming
Some poor wretch to instant torture.



INTERIOR OF CHIEF SHA-AK'S HOUSE, FT. WRANGEL.



So he turns with fearful gestures
This way, that way, swaying forward
Till his claw-like fingers, pointing,
Pause before some shrinking figure,
And no words, no prayers, no pleading
Can avert the doom so transferred
From the cunning Shaman's body
To the wretch whose worst intention
Ne'er deserved so sad an ending!
Such these doctors, honored, trusted,
Looked upon with greater reverence
Than the noblest old professor,
Classed among our grandest people,
Ever hopes to win from students
Or from those his skill has aided!

POWER OF THE MEDICINE MEN.

THAT his tribe may know how awful
Is the power within him vested,
Know how strong his healing virtues
Or his will to call each spirit,
Which he holds at once to challenge
Or to still in mild subjection;
At a certain time, each Shaman
Sets a day to make exhibits
Of his prowess with the demons
He has taken for his specials—
Chosen as his weird familiars—
Who but wait his signal sounding
To repair and wait his bidding.
On that day by him appointed

All his near relations gather
To perform their part as chorus
To the strangely wild performance;
But before they dare to enter
Each must part with every portion
Of the food within his stomach;
He must fast, and lest his victuals
Should defile the entertainment,
He must rid that useful member
Of the slightest crumb remaining,—
Take emetics, swab the passage
From the mouth as far as feathers
Can be forced toward the stomach,—
When, becoming so disgusted,
It most willingly disgorges
All the food or drink that lingers
Notwithstanding all the fasting.
Thus so faithfully preparing,
Oh, how strange it is to ponder
On the great event that ordered
Such a self-inflicted trial—
Such a farcical ordeal.

With their minds alert for wonders
And their brains surcharged with action,
Off they hie toward the dwelling
Of the doctor who has called them,
To behold the grand achievements.
There the Shaman waits their entrance,
With his masks and down and powder,
With his wands and drums and rattles
'Ranged in proper, careful order
For his sacred incantations.
Thus they meet at close of evening,
Gather while the sunset's tinting
Paints the sky in lines of beauty;
Then the grand performance opens
With a song, all join in singing,
While a drum is loudly beaten,
Keeping time to aid the singers
Who, with faces fixed and earnest,
Do their part, though ever thinking
Of the Shaman who has entered,
Dressed in blankets oddly woven,
With a crown above his face mask

Filled with down torn from the eagles,
With a mask, whose paint and carving
Bears the beak of crow or raven,
Shows the face of scowling demon,
Or displays the snarling muzzle
Of a wolf or bear—or something
Half a beast and half a creature—
Looking like a man distorted
With the most distressing torture.
In the hut's smoke-darkened centre,
Fierce and bright a fire is blazing,
And the Shaman rushes round it,
Round and round he hastens, gazing
All the while with head uplifted
Toward the hole through which the smoke-clouds
Rise and taint the evening breezes.
On he runs, each moment faster,
While his limbs and painted body
Turn and twist in strange contortions,
Keeping time to every drum-sound,
As it pulsates through the dwelling
And along the quivering fibres
Of the nerves of all assembled,

More than all the poor fanatic's,
Speeding wildly as a whirlwind,
Borne along till will is conquered
And he writhes in throes convulsive;
While the eyeballs, ever rolling,
Turn till not a sign of color
Shows beneath the trembling eyelids.—
On and on!—Meanwhile the singers
Mock the night-winds with their music.
And the drum-beats rise and vibrate
Till the very stars seem dancing
To the echoes of the sounding.
Suddenly the doctor pauses,
Utters cries that chill the hearers,
Stares upon the drum so wildly
That each waiting heart thumps strangely,
And the singers drop in silence
While they watch the great physician,
Note his every turn and listen
For the words his voice will utter—
For they think the spirit leads him,
Fills him with itself and bids him
Speak the words whose import solemn

Binds them to enrich the doctor,
Though themselves may almost perish.
When the spirit gives its message
Down the Shaman sinks exhausted
And he trembles as the demon
Leaves his frame : then up he rises,
Takes the down from out his head-piece,
And he blows it o'er the people
To insure the fiend's departure—
Thus to make it sure he dare not
Turn and harm the savage cowards.
Now the doctor dons another
Of the masks so meanly senseless,
Bangs a huge and noisy rattle,
Runs and screams and twists and dances
While the chorus-singers' chanting
And the drum's voice blend together,
Making sounds more wild and dirge-like
As the weary night grows onward.
O'er and o'er again repeated
Is that pandemonium concert,
Round and round the Shaman rushes,
Rolls his eyes and shouts and trembles !

Holds the fiend within his body,
While his own soul lies unconscious
Till the message has been given,
And each anxious mortal gazes
On his form as though the object
Of a bear with jaws distended,
Or a devil, horned and scowling,
Would not in the least surprise them,
From his quivering frame emerging.
So the night wanes, slowly, grimly,
Freighted with such fiendish orgies,
And the fair, sweet morning tarries,
Loath to meet the throng so grimy
With the smoke and flakes of ashes
That were blown about when lifted
By the Shaman's whirling antics :
Loath to soil her dainty raiment
With the smut from such a meeting,
Or to show her blushing features
Where the fiends have held their revel !
When at last she lifts the curtain,
And displays the sun arising,
Forth that trembling throng emerges

Hollow-eyed, sad-faced, with terror
Stamped upon their blackened features,
Looking here and there expectant,
Dreading every turn may bring them
Face to face with ghost or demon,
While they count the pay demanded
By each spirit for its portion,
Till their stores of blankets dwindle
Frightfully below the standard
Of the wealth they dared to hope for.
But they may not brave the question.
They must pay without a murmur,
Though their children, frail and sickly,
Die for want of food and clothing!
Though starvation stands before them,
With its painful, grinding horrors,
Or the fiends will join and work them
Woes too terrible to mention—
Bring them fate so sad and dreadful
That the loss of wealth were nothing
To compare with pangs so fearful
As the hate of fiends would give them!

A MEDICINE MAN'S BURIAL.

AND the Shaman died. The witches,
A Ever cunning, proved so wary
That at last they gained an entrance
To his hut and stole a rattle,
With it calling up the demon,
First among the dark familiars
Which the Shaman always conjured
In his wonderful profession.
When it found he had betrayed it—
For it thought the grinning rattle
Was a gift of his bestowing,
Knowing not that daring witches
Had purloined the signal token—
Then it let the minor demons

Loose upon the seeming culprit,
And before his explanation
Reached a point but half convincing,
They had proved so strong in number
And had seized him while unconscious
Of the slightest cause or caution,
That his breath grew short with passion,
Grew so weak with anxious pleading,
That at last it stopped. The doctor
Breathed no more. His spirit hurried
To a babe, whose birth that moment
Made a refuge most propitious.
So the grinning, angry furies
Skulked away; left unaccomplished
That which they had foully purposed.
Sneaked away; but moving backward
Kept their eyes all fixed and staring
On the coldly, silent body.
They had done their worst. They dare not
Touch the child who held his spirit,
And they could not mar the body,
For protecting friends already

Held it in their careful keeping.
Round him drew his friends, all weeping,
Relatives in grief most touching
Tore their hair, distressed their bodies
With sharp knives and burning fagots,
Ere they smeared his face with colors,
Dressed him in his finest clothing,
Brought his rattles, herbs and powder,
Brought his masks and drums and beaters
And his wealth of furs and blankets—
Tied his knees against his body,
Crowned his head with wands and feathers
Flecked with down of swan and eagles,
And enthroned him in a corner
Sitting upright, cold and stately,
With his varied wealth around him.
There they left him till the rising
Of another sun gave notice
That the time had come to change him
To some other quiet corner.
Day by day they change his quarters,
All the corners must receive him.

And they left him in each station
Over-night until the morning ;
Meanwhile feasting, weeping, moaning,
Bowed with grief, devoid of comfort!
On the fifth sad day they gathered
To perform the final honors—
Tied him to a board, bedecked him
With the best his wardrobe offered ;
Through his nose a wand was driven,
Through his hair another fastened,
Then an oddly-fashioned basket
Placed upon his head, and blankets
Wrapped with careful hands around him ;
And at last, all dressed and ready,
To the grave his form was carried,—
To the grave, a box-like structure
Mounted on four posts of cedar,
Shaded by a lofty totem
Waiting to be placed above it.
Near the water's edge they always
Build the graves for Shaman bodies ;
And they left him there, just closing

Fast the door that no one ever
Dares to open, lest the spirit
That forever guards the body
Should destroy the vile intruder
And bring trouble on his people !
Sometimes Shaman graves are builded
On the rocks upon the sea-coast,
Sometimes caves the sea has carven
Holds the sacred, crumbling mummy.
But no matter what the casket,
In the sight and sound of water
Must a doctor's corpse be buried—
Near the sea or rushing river
Must his resting-place be founded.
Awe and reverence are ever
Shown toward these lonely places,
And a youth's initiation
To the Shaman's sacred order
Is not perfect until finished
By the grave of some great doctor.
When the people need to pass it,—
Are compelled to pass the grave-house,

Some slight gift they leave beside it
To propitiate the guardians,
That their ire may not be kindled
At the implicated insult
In neglecting such a duty.
When a boatman passes by it
In his light canoe, he always
Drops a token in the water,
Hoping thus to gain good fortune ;
But the spirits are not dainty,
Almost any gift will serve them,
Just a slight remembrance, vested
In a piece of dark tobacco,
Will suffice to win the favor
If it is not once neglected ;
Or a drop of oil, some berries,
Or a fish prepared for eating—
Any of these common viands
Are received with marks of favor,
Will secure the trusting giver
With a safe return, and likely
Help to fill his hunting basket

With the prey he longs to capture.
Passing by, no one converses—
Hushed to silence, lightly stepping,
Fearfully they go and quickly,
Always dreading to disturb him
In the stillness of his resting !
And a little child may never
Let his voice be heard beside it.
If it must be brought in nearness
To the weird and dreadful dwelling,
O'er his head some down is scattered
And then blown away so quickly
That it scares whatever spirit
Had approached the young intruder ;
Thus from dreaded ill preserving
Him and all his fond relations.
Strangely lonely are these grave spots,
With their totems staring outward
O'er the river's rippling bosom,
O'er the sea-waves' endless surging—
Boldly standing, while beneath them
Flesh and bone are fast decaying,—

Costly blankets growing mouldy,
Gaudy clothing crumbling daily,
All becoming dust and ashes :
While the lifeless wooden image
Still upholds its graven features,
Holding guard for years together
With no changes but the touches
That time leaves upon the fibre,
Mellowing to the softest greyness
Every curve and indentation,
Every puncture of the knife-point,
Every line so deftly graven
By a hand long stilled, long resting
From the work it loved to fashion !

A HAIDAH TAAMISH.

WHEN the salmon catch is over,
And the fish preserved or bartered;
When the winter stores are gathered,
Safely housed secure from robbers,
Or from beasts who prowl, and seizing
Opportune, unguarded moments
Bear away a single burden,
That would give the careless owners
Food for many dreary meal-times;
Then there comes the time of feasting,
Conjuring, and holding revels
That would put to shame the orgies
Of a host of fiends and witches!
And the chief, a mighty Shaman,

Held in awe because so gifted
With the power to hold communion
With the imps and all things fearful,
Seeks a lonely mountain hollow,
Or a gully, wild and lonesome,
Far away from home and fellows,—
Shuts himself alone, securely
From the gaze of friend or foemen—
Almost starves himself—and gathers
Herbs and mosses for his practice,—
Seeks around for fallen spirits,—
Until frenzied by his fasting
And his wild imaginations,
He is lost to human feeling
And becomes a fiend incarnate.
Woe to one whose eyes behold him
While he works this transformation!
Naught can save the life, no mercy
Meets the woeful cry for pardon,
Of the wretch whose eyes have seen him!
Accident or full intention
Meet with equal, cruel justice,

And the cringing wretch falls lifeless .
When the Taamish finds him gazing ;
Or a friend, perhaps a brother,
Kills him, if the Shaman's failure
To behold or reach the culprit
Leaves him for a time in freedom.
If he dares deny the charges,
Tortures fearful rend the body
Ere he gives the blow that severs
From the frame the shrinking spirit !
When the Taamish gains the acme
Of his wild, insane religion,
And the "Naw-looks" deign to answer
When he calls upon them wildly ;
Forth he rushes from his hiding,
Almost naked, starved and crazy,
With a ring of russet alder
Round his throat, and on his forehead
Bound a great, fantastic chaplet
Which accentuates his madness.
On he comes and fiercely seizes
On the first who stands before him ;

And he bites great, reeking mouthfuls
From the living flesh and eats it—
Swallows with slight mastication
One or two large bites, still pulsing
With the heart's fright-hurried action!
On he rushes, snapping, biting,
Catching here and there another
Who will never dare refuse him
Food for this most horrid feasting !
Some there are so wildly frantic
That they give their trembling bodies
That the sacred chief may sever
From the flesh his choicest morsels :
While they all display, most proudly,
Wounds and scars they gained while yielding
To the beastly Shaman's hunger.
Men and women crowd around him
Awed, beyond their wildest dreaming,
As they watch the human tiger
Tear and eat their groaning comrades,
While his lips with blood are streaming
And his eyes roll blind with passion.

Some have died with wounds inflicted
By the Taamish in his gorging;
But their friends are proud to own it
And to show the grave that never
Friend nor witch may hope to open,
For 'tis now and always sacred,
Rendered so by Taamish teeth-marks
In the torn and poisoned body.
When at last the chieftain's stomach,
Gorged to bursting, grows too heavy,
Down he sinks in bestial torpor—
Lies for days, as vile a monster
As the meanest crawling serpent,
With no more of soul-life throbbing
Than a foul, begorged hyena—
While his breath, slow drawn and heavy,
Gives a fearful exhalation,
Like a coffin quickly opened
After days of tight enclosure.
Thus he sleeps : Each moment makes him
More and more a sacred object !
While his anxious people, watching,

Stay with bated breath beside him
And await his tardy wakening :—
Wait to hear the first, deep saying
That his elevated spirit
Will pronounce when life has quickened
In his frame, by man-flesh nourished!
Now he turns and sighs and stretches,
Grunts and groans, and slowly rises,
While his blood-shot eyes gaze round him
In a state absurd, bewildered,—
And his lips, as dry as parchment,
Crack when moved to call for water,
Which is brought with haste more eager
That the giver longs to listen,
And to see the smallest action
Of this noble, gifted doctor
Who has thus prepared his body
And his brains for great achievements—
Who has built a reputation
That will bring him wealth and honor,
And increase the slavish homage
Of these poor, benighted people !

THE ALASKA INDIAN'S FUNERAL.

HE has died ! although the doctor
Plied his arts with zeal so earnest
That his screams and shouts were echoed
From the hills around the dwelling ;
Sounding out so strange and fearful,
That the birds and beasts were frightened
And produced a dismal chorus.
All night long he yelled and pounded
On the hardened floor with drum-sticks,
When he was not shaking rattles
Or performing queer gymnastics
Round the fire whose blaze he heightened
With his charms and magic powder—
With the breeze his garb created

When he rushed so swiftly round it
That his form assumed a figure
Human part, and part a demon!
Though he waved his wands above him
And performed such stirring music
In the varied songs he chanted,
Kindly bending o'er the dying.
Yet he died!—the soul ungrateful
Fled and left the aching body—
Left the friends who watched around him,
Hoping that his trying ailment
Would depart in smoke of powder,
Or would take a swift departure
With the fiend who caused the illness,
When they paid their finest blankets
To the Shaman, who had promised
By his arts to fright the spirit
If his charms could not appease it!
He has left the doctor troubled
At the fate that stands and threatens
Till he finds the one whose witchcraft
Wrought this terrible bereavement.

He has died; around him gather,
Wives and children, friends, relations,
Wailing, moaning, as they paint him,—
Paint his face and hands with lamp-black,
Lined with red and glaring yellow—
Weeping as they bend his body
Till his knees are near his bosom:
Bind him so, then dress him warmly,
In his garments, furs and blankets;
Gather round him all his treasures
As he sits in deathly stillness:
And so let him rest in waiting
For the last sad rites that send him
Toward the land beyond the river.
Then they cut their hair, and darken
Face and hands with oil and blacking,—
Call the friends to meet and join them
In the funeral feast and aid them
In the dear one's sad cremation.
All night long some smoke, and hammer
On the floor with staves, while others
Sing a weird and solemn ditty,

Joined by women's cries and moanings,
While they tear their hair and, sometimes,
Slash their limbs till blood and blacking
Flow in streamlets on their clothing.
Just as morning tints the mountains
With its rosy light they hasten
To the pyre that some have builded
While the rest were wildly mourning,—
Built of logs of fir and cedar,
Joined and fitted like a cabin,
With fat chips of pine all ready
To ignite and greet the morning
With a smoke in rolling volumes
And bright tongues of flame as ruddy
As the sunlight's first appearing.
So the pyre awaits the coming
Of the corpse at early dawning ;
Then they lift the painted body,
Wrapped in blankets rich and costly,
Lift it through the roof, or bear it
Through a hole just freshly opened—
For no corpse is ever carried

Through the door-way of a building
Lest the fiendish spirits waiting
For its coming should molest it ;
Should accompany the spirit
On its way beyond the water.—
But, before the dead is lifted
Through the roof or other opening,
Some one holds a dog and drives it
Swiftly past the silent body.
So they cheat the waiting furies
Who, in blinded hate, attack him,
Thinking all their angry plunges
Are bestowed upon the dead one,
Knowing not their foolish blunder
Till the corpse is far beyond them
And the sacrēd fire all ready
Touches it and so preserves it
From their vile, vindictive clutches !
Solemnly they lay the body
On the logs and chips, and with it
Pile fine blankets, fish and berries,
Oil and furs and totem dishes,—

And for light the reddish powder
Which is used on all occasions
When a special light is needed.
When the corpse is all surrounded
With the necessary adjuncts
For his long and fateful journey.
One or two old men approach it
And ignite the chips and branches;
Close beside the pile they linger
Till the fire is kindled surely.
When the whole great pile is blazing
Then the widows fall upon it,
Lean their heads upon the bosom
Of the lord they duly honor,
Holding close beside his body
Till their hair is singed and crackles,
Till their faces feel the scorching
And they cannot bear the burning.
Sometimes friends will kindly aid them
In their mournful, solemn duty,
And will lift and throw them forward
On the blistering, scorching body ;
Then they turn away, and screaming

Writhe and twist like wounded serpents—
Throw themselves again upon him,
Showing thus their fond devotion,
Until nature cannot longer
Bear the strain imposed so madly,
And some tortured, mourning creatures
Are by force removed, while others
Sink exhausted almost dying !
When the fire has spent its fury
Faithfully they search the embers
And remove the bones and ashes,—
Gather every grain and place them
In a box prepared expressly
For the dead to rest in safety.
Safely they will place the casket
In the totem-pole that waits it
Close beside the open door-way ;
Or within a tiny building
Which, with others, stands in waiting,
In a spot secluded, lonely,
For the ashes and the offerings
That must stand prepared for spirits
Who might otherwise disturb them,—



INDIAN GRAVES, FT. WRANGEL.



Those pale ashes of the lost one,
In their search for food and clothing.
In its resting-place they leave it,
With more blankets, food and powder,
With their light canoe in waiting
If the soul should need its shelter :
Then they homeward turn, still wailing,
Mourning, comfortless and lonely :
And for days they fast, and never
Wash their smeared and blackened faces,
Never cease to sing his praises
And bewail his final absence.
Now the scarred and blistered widows
Hide away, unseen, unnoticed,
While the heirs prepare for feasting—
For the feast, the great Co-e-ky,
In which all the friends will join them
And the dear, departed spirits
Who have gone before, will meet them
And partake of all the feasting
When the fire has made the viands
Fit for such pure guests to handle—
Fit for spirit-life refreshment !

INDIAN'S DREAD OF DROWNING.

KILL him with a spear or arrow,
Beat his life away with war-clubs;
Crush him, bruise him, yes, dismember
Every quivering limb and muscle !
Torture him till life refuses
To remain and bear the anguish !
And the Indian will not murmur
If it saves him from the terror
Of a death beneath the water :
If by any of those by-ways
He is saved from death by drowning,
He will, cheerfully submitting,
Bare his bosom for the knife-blade
Of the hand that kindly guards him

From the water's dreadful clutches.
Though his food is mostly taken
From the rolling seas and channels ;
Though his greatest wealth is borrowed
From the creatures found within them ;
And he roams upon the surface,
In his light canoe, as safely
As the bird who darts upon them
And secures its finny victim ;
Yet he never fails to calm them
With an offering for the spirit,
Who can still the water's heaving,
Or can bid it rise and capture
For its own, the reckless Siwash,
Who has failed to make a present
To the god forever waiting
For the chance to work some trouble
On a helpless human victim.
If you ask them why so dreadful
Is the fate they fear attaining,
They will tell you one, who drowning,
Has been called beyond life's border,

Must forever wander, laden
With the dust of earth around him.
He is wholly without clothing
Or provisions for his journey
Toward the land, which even others
Find it hard to reach and enter.
He must wander cold and naked,
Hungry, without light to guard him
To the shore so faint and distant.
He may hear the gentle oar-dip
That impels the sacred life-boat,
But he cannot see the boatmen
Nor approach the sea-proof vessel.
Some will pass him, richly laden,
Burdened with their costly blankets,
With their food of fish and berries,
Crystal oil and creamy blubber,
With their lights so brightly burning
That the blaze can almost reach him;
But the darkness pressed around him
Will not yield its gloomy shadow—
Will not let one ray reveal him

To the light canoe that wanders
O'er the dark-green waves, and bears them,—
Those whose fate have bade them linger
In the darkness for a season,
To the fields beyond the river.
He may hear them gayly singing
As they near the joyful country ;—
But his voice may never join them,
Tho' his heart be full of music !
He may bound upon the billows
Which the cleaving vessel, foaming,
Forces back with every oar-stroke,
But they only bear him backwards
Into deeper gloom and sorrow.
Friends may pass, they would not know him,
Tho' he touched their hands in passing,
Tho' they heard his labored breathing
As he strove to gain a hand-hold
On the safely guided row-boat.
Ages on he may be wafted
Close beside the sailing haven ;
Even then, the shore, the free land

Will be far beyond his reaching !
And if some bright day awakens
That will find him surely landed,
He may hear the joyful laughter
And the feasting he may witness—
That is all. He cannot join them,
Nor partake of light and freedom,
For he came among them, hopeless !
With no food, nor light, nor garment,
And there is not one to offer,
To a poor drowned soul one comfort.
They will let him look, but pass him
As an angel should a serpent,—
As a pure, bright soul should gather
Round its frame, its ether garments
And refuse to touch the spirit
Evil as the power of darkness !

CO-E-KY OR DEATH FEAST.

NOW the funeral rites are over—
All the ashes safely gathered—
Though the smouldering pyre, still smoking,
Tells how recent the cremation—
When the tribe, but now so mournful,
Sends an invitation, asking
That a neighboring tribe will join them
In a feast, in proud remembrance
Of the one so lately taken
From their midst, despite the efforts
Of themselves and skilful doctors
To affright the foe, who conquered
And destroyed the life so quickly.
Yes, the tribe will come, for never

Is their other duty stronger
Than a potlatch or ko-e-ky
To the Indians of Alaska.
All the guests come, freshly painted,
Striped with black, and rich vermilion,
And the mourners, too, have added
Streaks of red across their faces.
Now they enter, each one holding
Round his form a dancing blanket,
Some of snowy white with trimming
Of a richly tinted border—
Others covered o'er with emblems
Borrowed from their choicest totems,
With the long and waving fringes
Adding grace to every motion.
Soon they sing and shout together,
Making odd and dismal noises,
Though the rhymes are often perfect
And the measure finely chosen—
Singing on they grow more social,
Even grow enthusiastic ;
And their feet and bodies quiver

With the power the music wakens ;
Till a dancing sprite possesses
All the mournful crowd assembled,
And, with one prevailing impulse,
Every creature, swiftly rising,
Joins in wild, ecstatic motion,
While the singing—and the shouting
Ebbs and flows, now almost silent—
Now to shrieks and whoops arising
Until all, at last exhausted,
Seat themselves around the dishes,
Near the great, inviting dishes,
Totem carved and richly laden
With the luscious oil of salmon,
And the bright, delicious berries
Floating round in tempting beauty.
Of this dish the hungry Indian
Never wearies ; not a feast time
Would be perfect if this mixture
Did not hold the post of honor
On the floor where all can see it—
If the dishes were not brimming

With the strangely sorted compound.
Seated, round the totem dishes,
Graven with the dead one's emblem,
All engage in friendly discourse
While they feast in social manner,
Each one, with his own spoon, dipping
From the dish a noble portion
Which he deftly lifts and carries
To his lips and gently swallows,
O'er and o'er again repeating
Until satisfied ; he rises,
Stows away his spoon, engraven
With his tribal crest or totem,
And again the dance continues
With more music, weird and noisy.
All the while the fire is crackling
With the sugar, oil and berries ;
With the dried meat, fish and flour,
Which they burn to make them wholesome
For the spirit that is lingering,
Joining in the grand co-e-ky,
Ere it leaves to make its journey

Toward the land of light and beauty.
Dancing, singing, still go onward
While attendants make all ready
For the great display of blankets,
Calico and cloth and muslin,
Bright and new, that wait the motion
Of one man, whose high position
Makes him worthy of such honor
As the chief whose hand shall spread them
With an equal, just division.
There they lie in piled confusion,
Blankets fine and rich and coarser,
With whole webs of snowy muslin,
Calico of brightest shading—
Brown and yellow, green and azure—
And good clothes of heavy texture
Lying there, and in their silence
Speaking loud of days of hunting,
Weary nights of anxious waiting
For the fish to bite and enter
In the nets in crystal water,
Ready to entomb the salmon ;

Or, perhaps, they tell of battles
With the moose or lumbering walrus,
Or of scenes where beasts were captured
For their soft and lovely seal-skins ;
But, however they were purchased,
There they are, a houseful fortune
It has taken years to gather— .
And perhaps its loss will beggar
This proud house and all belonging ;
But they bring them forth and give them
As the great, the crowning feature
Of this feast, to show how wealthy
Was the one whose days are numbered—
Vieing with their tribal neighbors
In the goods they gladly lavish
Though they suffer cold and hunger
When the wintry days grow shorter—
Though long years may pass above them
Ere they gain an equal fortune.
Now the chieftain calls to silence,
And the guests dispose their bodies
In the manner each one chooses,

As they hush to perfect stillness,
Watching with a close attention
Every action of the chieftain,
And the two important persons
Who are acting as assistants.
With a hook of form peculiar,
Carven for this purpose only,
Inlaid with designs in silver
Or of bone, or ivory polished
Till it glistens as he moves it
Through the wool and cotton fabrics,
Tearing them in narrow pieces,
And by aid of those who help him
Giving them around so wisely
That each present may be favored
With a stripe to keep as token
Of this great and noble feast-day,
And may name the absent mortal
Whose departure they are stamping
When they gaze upon the remnant
Of the dearly treasured dry-goods.
Each one keeps his riven treasure

Until two or three are gathered,
Then, to further guard the pieces,
He or she will have a garment
Formed perhaps of many colors
And of divers kinds of weaving—
Wool and cotton, fine and coarser
Making of the precious garment
Something so grotesque, so glaring,
That no creature but a savage
Could regard it as a treasure !
Now the great death feast is ended—
To their homes repair the neighbors—
On its journey starts the spirit,
And, if rich, the heir makes ready
To erect a fitting tribute
To remain forever standing
In remembrance of this feast-day
And the one it meant to honor.

FESTIVAL OF U-GI-AK.

HUNTERS save with careful handling
All their deer and wild-goat bladders,
Those of beasts they kill with arrows,
Whether land or water mammals ;
And they keep them all as perfect
As the rarest sportsmen trophies ;
Keep them where no hand shall touch them
To destroy their full expansion
When the feast, for which they're cherished,
Comes with bleak and chill December.
Mothers keep them, when their children
Take the life of rat and ground squirrel—
When the small, incipient hunters
Kill the tiny mice that scamper

Through the dry and rustling grasses—
Until winter calls the coast-tribes
To the feast, in which those bladders
Take the leading part, in honor
Of the spirits who hold fortune
Or distress for those that wander
O'er the restless seas and oceans.
When December comes, they gather
And inflate the strange collection,—
From the smallest, that an infant
Has secured in summer rambles,
To the greatest, that some hunter
May have risked his life to capture.
They expand them till they glisten
Like queer globes and bouncing bubbles,
And then paint them in all colors
That the native art can furnish ;
Striped, and waved, and oddly varied
As the painters' taste may dictate.
Then they make fantastic figures
Of their favorite birds and fishes,
Carved with skill and colored brightly

Far beyond old nature's tinting.
Of the birds, some are so fashioned
As to move their legs and eyelids,
And to flap their wings as freely
As if life produced the action.
These they hang among the bladders
On the beams within the Kash-ka.
All the birds and fish-like figures,
All the gayly painted bladders,
Are upon small cords suspended
From the Kash-ka's smoky rafters.
On the hearth a pole is rested,
Bound around with withered grasses
And with stems of weeds and mosses
They have gathered for this feast-day.
Now the natives all assemble
And they chant the sea-god's praises,
While the men, with constant jerking,
Keep the figures all in motion,—
Keep the bladders bouncing wildly
In and out, among the fishes
And the birds with flapping pinions.

Then the men and women rising
Form in line before them sagely,
And they dance, first with motion
Slow and solemn, gaining swiftness
As the moments fly, and spirits
Rise in strange, fanatic worship.
Bounding, dancing, whooping, chanting,
On they go before the objects,
Holding in their hands bright torches
Fed with oil from seals and fishes.
On the shore they stand in silence,
While the cords are tightly fastened
To the sticks, and heavy weighted
With large stones they find are scattered
All along the gloomy shore-line.
Then they chant again in voices
Ringing out across the sea-waves,
While the men cast forth the offering
To the gods of wind and water.
Silent now, each native watches!
And the great, dark eyes grow earnest,
For those bladders tell the story

Of success or heartless failure
In the coming year's endeavors.
Just how long they float is noted,
And the Shamen count the ring-waves
That denote the bladder's sinking
To arise no more forever !
And they tell with bold precision
How one owner may be laden
With a wealth of skins and blubber,
With supplies, both rich and plenty,
From the sea and mountain passes ;
While another bows most humbly
To the dismal-toned prediction
Of the poor returns his fish-net
Will bestow upon his labors,—
How his harpoons all will fasten
Far astray from walrus vitals,—
How the seals will all be damaged
That he thought were fine and healthy—
How stern fate has nothing for him
But distress, disease, starvation !

POTLATCH.

WEALTH had come to Sitka's chieftain—
Wealth in furs and costly blankets—
Wondrous wealth in land and servants :
Slaves, who bowed in humble postures
When he deigned to pass so near them
As to see the abject worship
Which their bended figures tokened,
Watched his every look and motion,
Lest the slightest flaw in service
Should condemn the cringing creature
To be burned, or fiercely beaten,
To be thrown on prickly branches,
Or to be most basely murdered.
Then this chief, whose wealth was boundless,

Thought to make his power more certain,
And to awe his shrinking subjects
With his grand, supreme importance.—
So he called his friends around him
And declared his large intention
To indulge his friends and neighbors
With the feast their souls held dearest,
With the finest, lordliest potlatch
That the tribe had dreamed of ever!
At that time the strong foundations
Of his large, new house should echo
With the sounds of feast and revel
Such as no bold predecessor
Had the wealth or power to equal.
In a space beyond the Kashga,
Where the men were all assembled,
Slaves upreared a pile of branches,
And of trunks of firs and spruces,
And around laid withered grasses,
Crossed with chips, all oiled and ready
To ignite and blaze up brightly
When the brands were placed upon them.

All prepared, the signal sounded
From the drums the Shamen carried,
To announce the grand commencement
Of the feast they all awaited—
Of the Potlatch, that would render
So much grace to-day and always
To the chief so brave and noble.
Up the fiery tongues ascended !
Crackling firs gave out their incense,
Balmy spruces lent their odors
To the curling smoke, that wasted
By the evening breezes, wandered
In and out among the dwellings,
Through the Kashga's open doorway,
And around the crowd assembled
For the wild and weird performance.
When the blaze had risen brightly
And had shown the waiting concourse
All the gay, fantastic fashions
And the paint profusely lavished,
Forth they came, most grave and silent—
All the friends and guests invited

To perform the dance that wakens
In the savage heart such passion,
That his eyes grow brightly eager,
And his limbs, although unbidden,
Join in time to song and drum-beat.
Forth they came, their costumes varied
As the taste of each had chosen,
Beast or bird or strange combining
Of the furs of beasts, and feathers
Plucked from water-birds, or stolen
From the wings of owl or eagle.
Heads were dressed in lofty fabrics
Made on basket-like foundations,
And with puffs of down or cotton
Fastened on in such queer manner
That they bowed, and bounced, and trembled
As each wearer swayed his shoulders
In the dance, whose every figure
Grew more wild as night grew onward!
Heads of beasts, ferocious, snarling ;
Heads of birds in act of screaming,
Or of eagles, owls, and ravens,

Still, sedate, and wisely silent—
Each in turn was borne grotesquely
On some manly brow or shoulder,—
And their faces gleamed and glistened
Light with oil and black with pine-soot,
Barred with startling lines and dashes.
There they stood, bedraped in blankets,
White and gayly dyed, contrasting
As the fire-light glared and flickered
With the wind's capricious breathing.
Some, arrayed in scantier clothing,
Showed their bodies stained and painted,
One with all the others vying
In the forms and artful tintings
That bedecked his wiry sinews,
And his toil-expanded muscles.
In a line they stood awaiting
For the master's welcome signal.
Then the women came behind them,
Dressed in garbs so wild and varied
As to point derisive fingers
At the one who dared to venture

To describe the wondrous fashions.
On their heads their silver bracelets
Nodded, scintillated, trembled,
As the crackling fire's reflection
Struck their burnished points and edges,
Or as every wearer's movements
Called for answering turns and flashes.
Then the dance began, first slowly,
And then faster, as the singers
Warmed and grew enthusiastic !
Now from side to side they doubled,
And then hopped, and stooped, and gathered
All their limbs as close together
As their dress and joints allowed them,
And with yell and bound sprung forward,
Like fierce crabs or angry spiders,
Making wild confusion wilder
As they turned, and swayed, and jostled,
Every one so deeply earnest
That he scarcely seemed to notice,
Though his neighbor's interference
Spoiled his most grotesque performance.

Thus the men danced, while the women,
Eyes downcast, and hands held loosely,
Rose and dropped in time according
With the chant their lips were singing,
Wilder, weirder grew the music,
Fiercer every dancer's motion,
While the fiery pile roared louder,
And the blaze grew hot and hotter,
Till at last the fire glowed dimly,
And the dancers, warm and weary,
Took with haste the feast of blubber
And the floating cakes of berries.
Silence reigned until the feasters,
Fed to full and glad repletion,
Turned to wait the crowning glory
Of the chieftain's generous potlatch.
Spread before the men appointed
Were the gifts his bounty offered
To his friends and brave supporters.
Blankets rich in shining texture
And in colors rare and costly,
Woven in the best designing

NATIVES OF ALASKA.





Of Alaska's gentle weavers ;
Furs of firmest pelt and fibre,
Glossy, beautiful and lasting ;
Bowls and pipes and vessels carven
In most strange and rare devices ;
Calico, whose glaring figures
Made the savage eyes gaze, longing
To possess such strands of beauty.
And all these were made to gladden
Some of those who watched expectant.
There they went, the pile grew smaller ;
Furs departed, tinted cotton,
Torn in stripes, already swaddled
With its folds, dark arms and shoulders.
All the gifts were proudly lavished
While the same low song continued
From the women, who were never
Counted with the friends receiving
Gifts of grace from chieftain donors.
All was done, the guests departed
Richer far in costly fragments,
And the chief, more proud and lordly,

With his store of wealth diminished,
But with pride so overflowing,
And with expectations swelling,
Until no past chief had ever
Reached his height of grand importance!

HOT SPRINGS OF ALASKA.

GIRT by oceans never silent ;
Always sighing, roaring, breaking
Into sobs when lashed too fiercely
By the storm's resistless fury !
Shouting, as it leaps and dashes
O'er the coast in maddest frolic,
Bearing trophies from the rock-points
Of its wildly daring visits—
Cut by channels, deep and narrow
And by other winding channels
Wide, and flecked with island beauty—
Cut by straits and shore-lines, wearing
Varied features, stern as granite,
Or as soft as southern forests

Draped with vines and trailing mosses ;
Traversed o'er by glancing rivers,
Pierced by bays, and inlets curving
In and out where shores are shallow,
Winding grass and sea-weed streamers
Into wreaths of green and yellow,
Garlands rare to grace the forehead
Of a fair, but changeful, goddess.—
So Alaska gleams and flashes
Underneath a shining net-work.
Smiling where the sun is brightest,
Frowning darkly in the cañons
Where no sound has ever wakened
But the cascade's tinkling echo.
Not content with all the waters,
From the ocean tide, salt laden,
To the limpid stream, inviting
To a draught, so pure, so sparkling
That the traveller ne'er forgets it
Wheresoe'er his feet may wander,—
Bright Alaska breaks asunder
Here and there, across the surface,

And uprears a column, seething
With the heat her heart-throbs kindle !
Throws great streams of water, boiling
As it bounds toward the cloud-lands—
Hissing, roaring, sending volumes
Of the steam her fires engender
Out toward the suntide glory ;
Up, beyond the mists arising
From the breasts of bay and river,
Catching rainbow tints and weaving
Webs of pale, transparent gauzes,
Throwing robes of gray and silver
Over trees the heat has blighted,
Coaxing into life the blossoms
Which her careless haste has faded,
Until plants and bushes, nurtured
By the warmth and moisture scattered
With profuse and endless patience
That atones for rash surprises,
Bud and bloom in rich profusion,
Mingling with the steaming odors
Perfume sweet as south-winds carry

From the fields of thyme and heather.
Fadeless green, the grasses wander
Everywhere their roots can fasten.
Shrubs spread forth their threads of emerald,
Topped with blooms of white as spotless
As the snow that dare not venture
In these vales of tropic verdure.*
Firs grow straight and tall, their branches
Fringed with mossy vines and climbers
Merging all their shades of greenness
With the leaves, which bear the life-blood
To the sturdy hearts, which, swelling,
Burst the bark and bid the trunk-girths
Year by year grow fuller, rounder,
Till those hidden vales boast monarchs
In the realms of spring and geyser !
On the bays the springs have heated
With their streams of steaming water,
Ducks and geese in numbers swarming,
Float and dive, or sail, majestic
As the king of birds, the eagle,
Sails along the trackless ether.

See note in Appendix.

Here the prowling bear treads softly
Toward the dark-eyed stag, whose antlers
Break the stems of tufted alder
And unearth the tender vine-roots
In the graceful creature's pathway.
Grouse upraise their crests as proudly
As though numbers stood enchanted
With their saucy, freeborn manners ;
And they drum their notes of warning
Just to hear the cadence echo
From the hills and o'er the ripples
Of the sheltered bays and valleys.
Song-birds fly from bough to hillock
Gladsome songs of joy uplifting,
While their nestlings sleep securely,
With no fear of careless hunter
Or of serpent fangs and glances.
Through the vales of dream-like beauty
Healing streams invite the siwash
To engulf his limbs and body,
Bathe his flesh till pain is conquered
And he starts, refreshed and glowing

With the warmth and health outpouring
From those thermal springs and fountains.
Streams that bear a freight of sulphur,
Sing along the pebbly byways,
Where the native takes his ailments
And beneath the waters plunging,
Soon returns to land, so altered
That a friend might pause to question
If that yellow, cleanly stranger
Were the same whose skin was darkened
To a coppery, dingy shading !
So those geysers, hissing, fuming,
Bounding up and boldly mingling
Steaming spray with flying cloud-mists,
Bear among their seething waters
Rarest dyes for hill and valley,
And for man both health and beauty !

CLUBBING THE SEA-OTTER.

LONG and loud the tempest rages!
Shrilly scream the winds while whipping
Into foam the crested breakers,
Which, with furious wrath uprising,
Dash and plunge along the coast line,
Fume and lash the rocks and cliff-sides,
Till the flecks of foam are scattered
Far and wide across the borders—
Far beyond the line which measures
Where the land and water limits
Should be held without encroachment.
But the waves in reckless fury
Rear and fling their clasping fingers
Where the faithful rocks are cloven—

Where the land is left unguarded—
And they seize the sand and pebbles—
Tear the moistened earth in ridges—
Bearing out to sea the trophies
Which they grasp and hold securely !
But, as though they half relented
When the earth so meekly yielded,
As they pass, they sweep the margin
Smooth and clear till glistening shadows
Bear no marks to tell the outrage
Of the lawless waves and breakers.
Blust'ring, plunging, still they answer
As the winds repeat the challenge,
And the din grows wild and frantic
While the earth looks on and trembles
When the winds and waters meeting
Shriek like angry beasts in battle,
Or, like thunder, roar and rumble !
When the sea lifts proudly skyward
Fearlessly to meet the foeman,
Who, although so boldly warring,
Never once displays his features.

When the war is wildly rampant,
And the winds, in rude tornadoes,
Sweep the isles from coast to seaboard ;
When the blending sounds, redoubled,
Detonate from crag to cliff-top,—
Then the hardy Aleut hunters
Launch their strong and tough bidarkas,
Seize their oars and skim like swallows
Through the rough, foam-whitened surges,—
Row for miles through rudest turmoil
Toward the isles where otters frequent,
When the sea has harshly tossed them
From the rafts of kelp and mosses.
When the winds have made them weary
With their rough, spasmodic charges ;
On the rock-bound coasts they gather,
There to rest and sleep unconscious
Of the fate so fast approaching
In the boats that bound like bubbles
O'er the rude, tempestuous billows.
Dangers face the bold marauders,
As they near the place of landing,

In the wind so hoarsely puffing,
In the sea's engulfing currents.
But they lash their boats and leave them
Far beyond the surf's rude clasping,
And with clubs in hand they hasten
Stealthily, but swiftly, onward
Till they near the otters, sleeping
On the rocks or sandy beaches,
And uplifting high their weapons,
Waiting till the winds cry loudly,
Crash! the club is quickly wielded
And an otter's skull is broken
With each stroke so deft and certain.
On they pass, from rock to hollow,
Dealing death with earnest purpose,
For their fortune lies invested
In those glossy coats that shimmer
As the pulsing life ebbs surely
From the shy, unwitting victims.
When the winds rest, then the Aleuts
Stand as still as rocks and boulders
Lest their steps should wake the creatures

Who would rush beyond their reaching;
And they keep their stand to windward,
Though each breath may dash them over
Where no hand could reach and succor.
But they fear the swift detection
Of their presence would be aided
If the otters once should scent them,
If the wind but swept their garments
Ere it reached the resting-places.
When the din is wildest, loudest,
When the bounding waves are roaring
And the winds have joined the voices
In the fierce and fiendish chorus,
Then they work, though tossed and beaten,—
Though their nerves are held in tension
That would snap if one more effort
Led them out beyond their bearing!
Though their hearts are wildly beating
And their breath comes short and painful,
Still they work, till daylight finds them
Or till nature, weak, exhausted,
Bids them stop and count their harvest.

Otters lie around uninjured,
Only where the skulls are shattered,
So their skins are valued highly
As no stain nor break has marred them
In their richly shining beauty.
Now the Aleuts count their victims,
Fill their boats and place their surplus
Where the sea-god cannot claim them,
Till they come with help to carry
All the prizes safely homeward.
Now the boats, so richly laden,
Slide across the slippery shingle,
And they take their oars and turn them
Toward the island home, so distant
That they scarce could see the coast-marks
Though the sun were shining clearly.
Through the mists, the raging billows,—
Through the clouds the winds have tattered,
Till their ragged edges hanging
Blend with foam the sea is churning;—
Through the sighing winds whose voices,
Dirge-like, break above their foreheads—

Through the sea, whose gaping trenches
Toss the boats and strain their oar-locks—
On they go, like sea-gulls, dipping
Either side their bending paddles,
Riding where the rollers lift them
Up toward the frowning cloud-banks,
Plunging down the glassy roadways
That a mountain wave has opened,—
Sometimes 'neath the foam-caps buried,
But, with mighty arms propelling
And with hearts to brave each danger,
On they glide toward the harbor !
Graceful as a bird they hurry,
Till their homes and friends awaiting
Greet them with a gleam of welcome,
Praise the brave young hunters' prowess,—
Land their boats and count the beauties
That the brave bidarka carries
Safe and sound through flood and tempest !

MORSE AND MAHLEMOOT.

IN the north where Bering's waters
With their restless waves and surges
Wash the islands bare and rock-bound,
Lave the isles whose shores are ever
Changing, where one swell deposits
Broken shells and oozy sea-weeds,
Dark-hued earth and rocks that crumble
When the winds and sunlight touch them,
While some angry breakers roaring,
High upon the coast, leap backward,
Bearing in their clasp huge fragments
Torn away in reckless passion!
So those isles grow great and lesser
At the will of wind and water,

And their features, ever changing,
Offer not one safe inducement
To the tribe, however savage,
To the huntsman nor the fisher,
E'en to Mahlemoots, most hardy
Of Alaska's dark-browed natives,
For a home while winter rages
Or while summer's sun shines warmly.
But these isles and those around them,
Great and small, are more important
Than the loveliest grass-grown islet
That a poet's dream could fancy.
For along their rough-hewn shore-lines,
On their wild and shell-strewn beaches,
Rests the Eskimo's deliverer
From starvation's painful terrors.
So upon a safer island,
Deep within Poonook's rough bosom,
They have built their winter houses—
Dug them deep for warmth and safety,
Made them as their knowledge dictates,
Strong, secure and free from danger.

They have built their hall, or Kashga,
Where the men all meet at evening,
There to talk of signs that promise
Herds of fat and tender morses,
Or with anxious voices murmur
Of the time of want that threatens
When the weather signs betoken
Poor and few the walrus catches.
When the summer comes propitious,
When the winds and water favor,
Then great herds of morses gather,
Drag their great unwieldy bodies
Out beyond the sea's embraces,
Up on rocky slopes and shallows,
Up on sandy bars and shingles
Prone they lie, so closely crowded
That one leans upon another
As they snore in restful slumber.
If some threatening sound disturbs them
Lazily one lifts his shoulder
And with rolling eyeballs gazes
Far and near for fear of danger;

But a moment's watch suffices
If he finds no lurking savage.
But to make secure their safety,
To insure against surprises,
Ere he sinks again in stupor
With his tusks he prods his neighbor,
Who in turn repeats the watching,
Prods the next and grunts and settles
To a long, dream-free siesta.
But should beast or man be near them,
Then dismay spreads fast among them,
And they roll and turn and tumble,
Grunt and groan and toss each other
In their haste to flee from danger
And to hide beneath the waters.
There they lose their graceless motions
And with ease fly swiftly outward
From the shore and man's encroachment.
But the hunters, wise and wary,
Steal with noiseless footsteps near them,—
Careful still to keep to windward
Of the cumbrous, watchful quarry.

Armed with spears and jointed lances,
Whose sharp points, when once inserted
In the struggling morse's vitals,
Loose away from hilt or handle,
But, secured by cords, hold strongly,
That the beast may not go farther
Than the length of thong allows it.
There they let him plunge and tremble,
Let him turn and twist and flounder
Till his weakness wakes their courage,
And strong, willing hands join, eager
To secure the pondrous store-house.
Soon as life has fled they hurry
To remove the hide and open
To the longing view the blubber
And the reeking flesh whose odor
Makes the hungry eyes beam brighter
And the sturdy arm grow stronger!
Carefully the hide is carried
To the "sweating-hole," that makes it
Pliable and soft to handle.
It is scraped and cut and fastened,

Stretched and fastened strongly, firmly,
For their odd, secure bidarkas
Owe their strength and darting lightness
To the gaunt, ungainly walrus.
And the sinews all are gathered,
And the shreds of hide, the flippers,
All the bones, the tusks, whose ivory
Tempts the traders' yearly visit,—
E'en the huge, disgorged intestines,—
Every part is garnered wisely,
And the flesh! its every portion
With no crumb of waste is cherished,
For the Innuit's life is nurtured
By the great, disgusting monster!
To our eyes the brute is hideous
In his slow, ungainly movements,
In his huge, unshapely body,
In his skin, all warts and pimples,
In his tusks that gleam so fiercely,
In his eyes that roll and wander
Here and there in search of danger,
While his head remains as quiet

As though rest were all his object !
And, to us, his flesh is teeming
With a strong, offensive odor,
While the taste is all-sufficient
To destroy the strongest longing
For a dish of Innuit dainties !
Yet no traveller o'er the desert
Ever greets a spring more gladly,—
No poor, starving wretch looks forward
To a plenteous meal with longing
More intense, more wild and eager
Than the Mahlemoot looks forward
To the morse's yearly coming.
With him comes his boat, his weapons ;
With him comes, in part, his clothing,
And he brings the light that brightens
Those dark, subterranean dwellings.
More than all, the food he bears them
Makes his coming far more blessed
Than all else the sea could bring them.
As the palm to India's natives,
As the cocoa-palm and guava,—

As the broad, inviting banyan
To the footsore, thirsty traveller,
As the spring to winter-weary,
As the gleam of gold to misers,
So the fat, unwieldy walrus
Holds its place to longing Innuits,
To the Mahlemoots—Alaska's
Dark-eyed, earnest walrus-hunters

THE SEAL OR PRIBYLOV ISLANDS.

In the vast, tumultuous waters
Of the sea, the restless Bering—
Far from rock-bound coast, from mainland,—
Out where no high mountain ranges
Stand between the wind's fierce raging
And the bare, defenceless headland,
And the storm-washed hills and shallows,
Hold their own, the wild Seal Islands—
Pribylov—their name conjointly ;
But for each a saint is sponsor,
Or an animal, whose presence
Made the island famed by hunters,
By the men whose needs first led them
To regard the strange, dumb creatures

As a boon by seasons carried
To their reach from out the sea-depths.
Thus they stand, "St. Paul" and "Walrus,"
With "St. George" and one called "Otter,"
Neither great in size nor number—
Distant, weird and strangely lonely,
Yet withal for ages holding
On their sea-washed shores the bearers
Of a wealth that nations covet,—
Of the food and household comforts
That have saved the dusky natives
From starvation's painful terrors,
From the blasts which winter's revels
Throw around them, all regardless
If some lives should pay the forfeit
For their bold and fierce carousals !
"Walrus Isle," a ledge so rocky
That no herbage feeds upon it,
Makes a resting-place for morses
And a home for screaming sea-fowls,
Who return each year and find it
Swept and cleaned by wind and waters,

All prepared for future nestlings,
Whose vast numbers would be greater,
But that human kind grown greedy
For a chance from morse and seal-meat,
Steal within their chosen precincts
And with ruthless hands filch numbers
Of the eggs that soon would quicken
Into awkward, gaping sea-gulls,
Into restless, croaking arries,
Into auks or tiny parrots.
Thus the isle one season shelters
Breeding sea-fowl by the million,
And another gives the walrus
Room to rest and sleep in comfort.
“Otter Island,” bold and barren,
Holds aloft its silent crater,
Grimly scarred as though but lately
Fire and stones and molten lava
Burst from out the deep recesses,
Though no man has e'er beheld it
Aught but black and cold and silent.
Once the otters swarmed upon it,

But to-day the sea-birds clamor
Round the frowning bluffs and hollows,
While a myriad small blue foxes
Haunt its rock-hewn gloomy caverns.
On its coast a few seals linger
For awhile to rest, and maybe
To recruit their failing spirits
Ere they join the countless thousands
Who surround the larger islands.
There "St. George" stands bold and rock-bound,
High his wind-swept bluffs uplifting
While the sea beats all around him,
Only finding one small entrance
For its waves to rush unbroken—
Only one small stretch of sand-beach
Over which to wash and tumble
Ere returning swiftly, laden
With small rifts of sand and sea-weed
That were cast by older breakers
Who had torn them as they travelled
From some rock, whose submerged surface
Gave their long and slender fibres

Strong support against the wave-sweeps,
Till one stronger, more determined,
Wrenched the quivering, waving streamers
From the parent stems, and threw them—
Careless of the fate awaiting—
On the island's sandy shingle.
On the cliffs the wild birds gather,
Reproducing countless numbers;
Foxes roam and cats make music,
Whose loud chords arouse the people,
Who, half frenzied, hunt and kill them,
Hoping only by such treatment
To gain rest and peaceful slumber.
On the sandy beach the fur-seals
Haul their rounded, glistening bodies,
There to rest and bear their young ones,
There to spend the time of breeding
And, alas, to lose vast numbers
Of their young and handsome members.
Here and there this rocky island
Bears upon its breast bright patches,
Waving plumes of slender grasses,

Blooming herbs and tender mosses
Spread around as if to cover
And to hide the ground that opened
To receive the streaming life-blood
Of the calm seal-hunter's victims.
From one bare, tall cliff, at springtime,
Falls a cascade pure as crystal—
Plunging from the wild-rock surface
Out beyond the island's shore-line,
Deep within the blue sea-water ;
On it flows in limpid fairness,
Feathery light, and pure and lovely
As its spray, its silvery ripples
And its deeper tide streams onward
Down against the dark rock faces,
On toward its leap for freedom.
How its waters gleam and glisten !
How the foam, like fairy footsteps,
Touches here and there the grimness
Ere it falls to lose forever
All its own bright, frost-like beauty
In the waves that rise to meet it—

In the thundering waves that Bering
Sends to greet the lovely stranger !
On "St. Paul," the larger island
And the one regarded always
As the chief among the seal-group,
Lakes and small lagoons are nestled
Up among the rocky headlands,
Held in deep, uneven basins,
Far above the great, fierce billows
That with jealous rage forever
Shout and cry against the bulwarks
That protect the clear, fresh waters
From the lapping sea's encroachment.
Tiny, silver fish sport gayly
In the brightly sparkling lakelets,
Birds and beasts flock on their margins,
Share and share alike with people
To partake of pure refreshment
From the sweet and limpid water.
Grasses wave and blossoms scatter
Tinted petals, as the wind-breaths
Sweep along the flats that gave them

Room to grow and flaunt their beauty.
Birds surround the hills and cliff points,
Sparrows flock in countless thousands,
And the hungry hunters catch them
Eager for the savory morsels
That produce a change so dainty
From the endless round of seal-meat,
Stale and rank, or fresh and greasy !
Here the sandy dunes are tinted
Dark as slate with shades of purple,
Touched with flecks of red and yellow,
Shading off to paler tinges
As the sand is dried and drifted.
On this island's shores the fur-seal
 Crowd in vast and countless numbers,
Male and female, grand old sultans
With their full and lively harems,
Fat young bachelors, whose numbers
Swell the hunter's hope of profit—
Mother seals with pups as frisky
As a crowd of playful kittens,—
Old and young and gray and lively,

Rich in fur or old and useless,
Crowding, roaring, fighting, fondling,—
Left in safe and clear possession
Of the hauling grounds and harems,
Or the droves of young ones singled
For the yearly wholesale slaughter.
On "St. Pauls," the larger island,
And "St. George," the next in station,
People live in homelike comfort,
Having houses, stores and churches,
Owning much to make their living
Far above the older natives.
On each island's loftiest summits
Stands a cross—the Christian emblem
That the Russians always planted
When their band had found a landing,
Whether on a lonely island
Or a grand and lovely country.
Yet the waves forever thunder
On these distant, wild sea-islands !
And the winds forever murmur
Round the rocks and in the caverns,

And the winter storms howl fiercely,
Sweeping all before their fury,
And the summer fogs hang o'er them,
Like a misty pall, forever
Shutting out the golden radiance
Of the sun's resplendent beauty.

THE SEALS OF ALASKA.

RUSSIA'S ice-bound coast looms coldly
O'er the North Pacific waters,
Over Bering's waves that clamor
Where the land resists their forces—
Where it holds its rock-bound border
Firmly strong against the forging
Of the bold, ambitious wave-sweeps
That forever aim to blot it
From the coldly barren country,
From Siberia's ice-locked province !
Down they flow along the shore-way
Of Japan and soul-dim China,
Curving round the mystic islands,
Where the cold north waves are tempered

By the softly sweeping current—
By the sun-warmed stream that travels
From the golden shores of Asia—
Wandering through the chill-waved ocean,
Till they reach far-off Alaska—
Bearing east to that lone country
And its islands, darkly fog-dimmed,
Waves that pulse like tender heart-throbs,—
Like a faint, electric message
From Mongolia's dusky natives,
To their dark Alaskan compeers.
Through the miles of trackless water
Booming on Columbia's shore-line,—
Thundering on the coast of Asia ;—
Stretching from one sphere's bold margin
Toward another's eastern outline—
Wander seals in myriads, sporting
Where the ocean caves are silent,
Where no echo voice can startle
With its weird and shadowy music—
Where no form of man can frighten—
But where peaceful quiet reigning

Wakes no fear to mar their pleasure.
Where they find their homes in winter—
Where they spend the early springtime—
None can tell, but wise conjecture
Finds them wandering o'er the ocean,
Scattered through the miles that measure
Vacant space from sullen empires
To the glad Republic's domain,
Glorying in untrammelled freedom,
Gamboling in the liquid desert,
Finding food in rich abundance,
Deep within their watery store-house—
Or asleep in Nature's cradle,
Rocked and soothed by tidal motion.
But when spring has come they gather
In a host that counts by millions—
And with one consent press onward
Toward the lonely, mist-crowned islands
In the sea between Alaska
And Kamchatka's barren landmarks.
On they come, those countless thousands,
Scrambling up the slippery highway,

Hauling up their glistening bodies
With a strange, uncertain motion
Painful to behold, and seeming
Wearisome to all ; yet upward
Still they come, by Nature guided
To that great retreat, where ages
Tell of just such teeming millions.—
Roaring, bleating, groaning, snoring—
Old and young in odd confusion
Cause a din like distant thunder,
Rolling down o'er hills and valleys—
Make a sound like deep-toned waters
Rushing through resisting cañons—
Or like mightiest wind-storms, swelling
With a world's sad weight of sorrow !
Out to sea that noise is carried,
Weird and fearful in its cadence ;
But to those who wait their coming,—
To the hearts of watching Aleuts,
Every tone is filled with music ;
No more welcome guest has ever
Landed on those sea-girt islands !

Grand old patriarchs, uplifting
High above the rest their shoulders,
Guard with care their swarming harems ;
Graceful heads are raised to listen
Or to view a curious stranger :
But no angry sounds are uttered,
Or not one aggressive motion
Made against his close inspection ;—
But if one great seal should ever
Try to seize another's consort,
Then a most terrific battle
Wages wild and fierce, till either
Falls and lies in great exhaustion,
Yields in death his angry passion,
Or retreats most humbly conquered.
In a space so small one wonders
How they live so closely crowded—
Old and young lie close together—
One perhaps is calmly resting
On its kind companion's body,
Or it may be one is trembling
With the weight of such a number

That it seems its life must forfeit
That the rest may sleep in comfort.
As they sleep they sigh and quiver—
Start as if a dream affrighted—
Groan as if some hideous nightmare
Held them with its vice-like terrors :—
And they fan their fin-like flippers
With an odd, spasmodic movement.
Never still, the restless thousands
Swarm like bees, and sound while sleeping
Like the buzz of wings, increasing
To a million times their uproar.
On the earth they seem ungainly,
In the waves their every motion,
Turned with ease, is strangely charming ;
Diving, curving, darting, bounding,
Birds in air are not more graceful,
Not more free and gayly joyful
Than the fur-seals of Alaska.
Months they stay among those islands,
In whose dim mist-light they revel,
Making all the earth a-tremor

With their active sound and motion,
Then they leave ; the isles, forsaken,
Look more wildly cold and lonely
Than before they came to wake them
From their long and wintry quiet.
And they ! Who can tell their eerie ?
Who can tell the goal that shelters
All those graceful, fur-dressed thousands,
All those soft-eyed, sea-rocked millions ?

NA-ASS RIVER.

NEAR Alaska's southern boundary,
Flows a river called the "Na-ass,"
By the Indians named "New River;"
And they tell their reason fully
While they point with earnest gestures—
Show, without a doubt, the proof-marks
Of their legend—of the story
Of the river and the ashes,
Heaps of dust and stony objects
Which are strewn beside its margins.
Thus they tell the painful legend :
Years ago some wicked children
Played beside a sparkling streamlet,
Paddled in its limpid waters,

Tossed its crystal drops around them ;
Frightening with their shouts the fishes—
Silver fishes, bright as moonlight—
Which, with quivering fins were darting
Here and there in sportive pleasure,
Or in search of food, were peering
In and out among the hollows
Where the slippery stones were lying—
Sometimes touching, sometimes leaning
Far away each from the other.
Soon those noisy, dark-faced children
Of their gentle sport grew weary,
And, with heartless mischief teeming,
By the wicked spirit goaded,
Some, with movement quick as flashes,
Seized the leaping, swimming salmon,
Caught and held the trembling fishes,
Held them tight and cut them deeply,
Scored their backs with gaping knife-wounds,
And then crushing stones within them,—
Sharp and grinding stones imbedding
In their wounded backs, they loosed them,

Laughing at the tortured creatures
As they plunged and writhed and twisted,—
As they tried to swim but could not
For those gaping wounds that severed
From the flesh the gauzy fin-lines
That before had waved so smoothly—
Curved and waved with every motion—
While the fishes, diving, swimming,
In their home were adding beauty
With their grace to rippling waters
And the sunlight's gay reflections.
So the children played and added,
Now and then, another victim
To their heartless, cruel pleasure ;
While the great, good Spirit watched them,
Saw the sport that caused their laughter
And beheld the silent torture
Of those salmon while they suffered,—
Watched the gaping mouths and eye-balls
Starting out, impelled by efforts
To regain their wonted motion,
To escape their painful burden !
Long the Spirit watched and waited,

All the while his anger rising.
But the youthful tyrants glорied
In the pain their fun was causing,
And they touched their dying victims,—
Urged them on with sticks and branches
Till they turned and, floating lifeless,
Hid their backs, so torn and tortured,
In the stream that gently bore them
Far away to reach the ocean !
Long the Spirit watched and waited,
But the cruel sport continued,
Till his wrath grew hot and vengeful !
Then he caused a fire to kindle—
Sent a fire, so fierce and mighty
That it seized the dancing waters,
Lapped the waves with heat consuming,
Caught those children in its fury
And with roaring voices, buried
All their bitter cries and shrieking—
All their calls for help were deadened !
And the Spirit saw their writhings,
As they saw their wriggling victims—
Looked upon them till their ashes

And the river's dust were mingled—
Until naught remained to answer
When the people came to find them
But the seething stones and ashes,
But the smoking dust remaining
Of those cruel, heartless children
And the river, which their playing
Doomed to swift and fierce destruction,
Until naught was left to witness
Of its pure, transparent beauty
But the dust and stones and silence.*
When the tributary waters
Saw the ruin spread before them,
Saw the lovely stream had vanished
And its funeral pyre had smouldered,
Wild with fear they sought a channel
Clear from all the steaming rubbish,
But so near, their tinkling murmurs
Seem to sing in tones of warning,—
Sing a dirge, in softest whispers,
For those children wild and wilful,
And their blighted sister streamlet!

* See note in Appendix.

So the Indians tell the story
Of the lava bed that borders
On the river named the Na-ass—
Of the strange rough bed, resembling
In its course a river's roadway ;
While they see in piles of lava
Remnants weird of forms cremated,—
Shapes of bones, and pallid ashes
From the waters burned to cinders
By the fire the great good Spirit
Sent to punish deeds so cruel,
And to warn all other mortals
From the fell desire to trifle
With the lives so free from vileness,—
With the fish, whose tender bodies
Rightly used are full of virtue
As a flesh- and oil-producing
Article for home consumption,
Or for traffic with the countries
Whose bright streamlets cannot furnish
Aught so rich as silvery salmon
Nurtured in the pure, deep waters
Of the Northland's bounding rivers !

FISHING ON NA-ASS RIVER.

ON the shores of Na-ass river,
Where the broader banks allow it
To display its liquid beauty
For one mile and half another,
There the small fish gather yearly ;
Every year their faithful coming
Brings the tribes from east and westward
To secure for food the fishes,—
To obtain the gleaming tribute
Which the river bears them, truly
As the season calls it upward
To the water's restless surface.
When the time is near, some watchers
Wait the fishes' swift advancement,

See the river's bosom quiver
With the million graceful swimmers
And then fly and call the natives
To the bright, abundant harvest.
Everywhere is eager bustle
As the tribes from either country—
From Columbia's British shore-line
And the isles of fair Alaska—
Deck themselves with oil and blacking
Touched with lines of gay vermilion ;
Trim their heads with gaudy feathers,
And bedrape their limbs and shoulders
Bright with clothes or T'linket blankets,
Every garment bearing emblems
Of the wearer's tribal totem,
Of the likenesses of creatures
Wild and savage in their nature.
Songs and dances tell their coming
As they gather by the water,
Hundreds upon hundreds meeting
In a friendly, joyous manner
Ere they launch their boats and utter
Words of praise to charm them nearer,

Flattering songs to win the fishes;
Worshipping the tiny swimmers
Who appear in such profusion
That with branches, armed with nail-points,
They can fill their boats so quickly
As to make a glinting net-work
Where the gay canoes pass over,
East or West, as they deliver
To the waiting crowds who carry
Basket-loads of quivering beauties
To the hands, whose constant duty
Is to turn the gleaming fishes
Into oil for use in winter;
Or, to those who cook and serve them
To the troops of hungry mortals
Who behave as though starvation
Had been checked just at the moment
When its terrors pressed them sorely!
Watch the scene! the river teeming
With the fishes, small and dainty,
With canoes, like greedy vultures
Swarming where the prey is plenty,

And with men whose painted bodies,
Feathered heads and glistening paddles
Dart about in wild confusion,
Making such fantastic pictures
As would test the swiftest pencil
Of the most ambitious artist !
Overhead the gulls are poising
Ere they drop and skim the water
Where, mayhap, a spot is vacant
For an instant, as some boatman
Has departed with his burden.
There they group, a myriad wing-tips,
Looking, as they fly, like snow-flakes
Ready to descend and cover
All the scene with spotless beauty ;
And above them, soaring grandly—
Scarce a motion in their pinions—
Eagles scan the river's bosom,
From whose depths they hope to garner
Food for hungry, screaming eaglets.
Eagles, gulls and men, all vieing
With each other for possession
Of the tiny, timid fishes,—

Wait above the tossing water,
While beneath the shining river
Fin-back whales and clumsy codfish,
Halibut and bounding porpoise
Jostle each against the other
In their eager, swift pursuing
Of the prey which tries to hasten
From the hungry jaws distended
To engulf the frightened creatures !
Up they dart, when man impales them,
Tearing cruelly their fibres,
Crushing out their little life-span
As a child would grasp a bubble,
And, reducing them to masses,
Ugly, motionless and shapeless.
In the sunlight birds affright them
And they plunge beneath the surface,
Where the larger fish await them,
And they dart about, uncertain,
When the master, man, assigns them
To himself a special offering
From the river-god and fish-god—
From the gods of land and water.

On the shore long boats are laden
With the fish and river water
And with stones, which first are heated
Till they glare with angry brightness—
Hiss and sputter when they tumble
In the water, which they heighten
To a bubbling, broiling temper,
When it cooks the fish and makes them
Yield their fat in liquid amber.
This the women store in vessels
And preserve with careful patience,
Pressing with their feet the masses
So that no clear drops are wasted.
Other fish are packed by women,
Each as much as she can carry.
Then they all prepare for feasting,
Dancing, worshipping the fish-god,—
Doing homage to the spirits
That they feel are swarming round them,
Throwing gifts in wild profusion
That no witch nor fiend of evil
May have cause to wreak its vengeance
On themselves or friends or children !

PINNACLE ISLET.*

OUT at sea ! no sound to answer,
Though our guns should tell of danger,
Though our captain's voice should thunder
Through the trumpet loudly, wildly,
Though the bright ship-bell should tremble
With its loudest, longest clangor,
Though each human voice should join it
With the saddest, woful calling !
Out at sea ! no sound to answer
But the sea's loud, tuneless roaring,
But its monotone, as changeless
As the waves' wild sobs and moaning !
Naught to answer but the sea-voice
And the winds, whose heartless laughter

* See note in Appendix.

Echoes back in tones as jeering
As a fiend's, whose joy grows wilder
When a tortured mortal murmurs.
Out at sea ! the land so distant
That the mists obscure it darkly,
And the cloud-banks seem less vap'rous
Than the lone, sea-shadowed islands !
Out at sea ! our ship an atom
And ourselves weak toys for Neptune
If the sails should fall disabled
Or a leak should chance to open !
Dancing waves around us gambol—
Sun-kissed waves, as bright as jewels—
Cloud-dimmed waves, like shrouded opals,
Touch our ship, then leap beyond us,
While their bright companions linger
Close beneath our sheltering shadow.
Green and cloud-like blue the surface
Turns toward the sunlit azure
And in small, bright patches, glistens
With the golden orb's reflection.
Far away white flecks gleam softly,

Clear as silver newly burnished,
Or like snow-flakes, lightly resting
On the rippling waves and eddies.
All around the dim horizon
Hides behind a misty veiling
That sometimes uplifts and wavers
Like a thin and gauzy curtain,
Showing far beyond more water,
More cool waves, more mist and shadow.
Listen ! not a sea-bird whispers—
Not a sound but waves in motion,
And the slow, dull sounds that answer
To the sails when winds outlift them.
Look ! beyond the sea no vision
E'er can pierce those banks of vapor !
Hush ! and gaze far out beyond us,
Far away and glancing upward
Beams a light, a flame, a beacon.
From the sea's cold breast it rises.
From the wild, cool tide uprearing,
See, a light gleams red and golden !
Fish lights ? No, no fish scales ever

Shone with such uneven splendor !
And no fair auroral beauty
Ere confined itself so closely
As this brightly gleaming stranger.
On we sail, still nearer, nearer,
And the light beams out more brightly
And then dies away as quickly
As the lightning's fervid flashing.
Is it lightning ? No fierce pealing
Calls it forth in thunderous voices,
No black clouds with angry frowning
Tell of storms and seething tempest.
Now, behold a rock uplifted,
Sheer from out the sea it rises
Full a thousand feet or over,
From the sea-line to the fissure,
That one moment yawns as darkly
As the earth's most gloomy caverns,
And the next is glowing fiercer
Than Verstova's fervid flashing !
Dark and high the rock stands sentry
Over Bering's troubled bosom,

And its minute-gun booms loudly
As it sends its fiery message
Up toward the gloomy cloudland—
Out to islands near and distant—
Far across the sea's dark ripples
And its crested waves and billows.
Flash and boom ! the sound repeating
Wanders on till lost in distance
And the lurid stream rears upward
Like a fierce and curbless charger,
Just a moment's time, then sinking
Slowly, sullenly, but surely,
Fades away, except the lava
That awhile retains the heat-glow,
And the stones that shine like eye-balls
On the rugged sides and fissures.
Then, when all are pale as ashes,
Boom ! again the sea-gun belches
And repeats the glow and glory
And the slow but painless dying.
Is there hand to paint the beauty
Of that lonely, fire-crowned islet ?

Is there voice to tell how wildly
Gleams that weird, majestic stranger
Who has none to claim his kinship
In those cold Alaskan waters ?
O'er the sobbing seas, the islands
And the rocks, whose bold desires
Bid them ape the forms and features
Of their nobler island neighbors,
Towers the splendid fiery mountain.
Lofty and alone ; no echo
Wakens when his voice calls loudly
And no answering flash makes answer
Though he re-repeats his question.
His the only voice to scatter
Waves of sound on Bering's waters,
His the only light to waken
Brightest gleams upon his bosom !

THE BIRTH OF BOGASLOV ISLET.

SUMMER'S laughing eyes were saddened
By the first cool wave of autumn,
Which had passed among her jewels,
Turning brown and limp the petals
That her watchful care had tended,
That her gentle hand had tinted
With a brush whose slightest touches
Waked the bloom on phlox and gentian,
Tinged the heart of stately iris,
Caught the tenderest blue and laid it
On the drooping violet's bosom.
Now she gazed on all so blighted
That their grace had gone forever;

So she drew her gauze-like raiment
And departed, as the echoes
Of the autumn winds were mocking
At the grief her eyes were telling,
Though her lips no sigh had uttered.
Men and women worked in concert,
Making stores for winter usage,
Curing berries, flesh and blubber ;
Stretching skins for beds and clothing ;
Hast'ning to repair their dwellings,
That the snow, in fitful skurries,
Should not find a chink to enter ;
When a loud report re-echoed
From the hills and mountain summits !
Booming o'er the wild sea-water
In a long, vibrating cadence.—
Ere it passed away another
Crashing, thundering roar succeeded !
In its strength the islands trembled.
Oomnak shook, and Oonalashka
Felt the shock from verge to centre.
Silence fell ! . The quaking islands

Grew as still as babes in slumber,
And the startled natives wond'ring
What should cause the strange commotion,
Paused awhile, then finding danger
Followed not the frightful rumble,
Turned again to work, but questioned
Now and then the older people.
Ere the wisest sage among them
Could have formed a safe conclusion,
Wild and loud there burst above them
Sounds that mocked a cannon's roaring !
Tones like hoarse artillery voices
Clashing forth when foes contending
Meet and hurl their fiercest charges !
Long vibrations rose and echoed
Like the battle-cry of muskets !
Notes, like pealing claps of thunder,
Shook the isles, from crested mountains
Down to where their feet are resting
Deep within the sea's dark cradle !
While the waves of Bering bounded
Far beyond their constant limit,—

Surged and dashed in maddest breakers
Round the helpless, quaking islands.
People cower'd in nerveless terror,
Knowing not how soon the ocean
Would engulf their homes, or wash them
From their once secure foundations.
Clouds of smoke obscured the sunlight,
Rolling here and there so dimly
That 't would seem the earth had risen,
Hurling clouds toward the sun's face !
Showers of dust and ashes scattered
Over all the land, and blinded
Those who looked with wondering gazes
Toward the flying clouds, and listened
To the constant, angry growling
That for days and nights still muttered
Like a foul and threatening monster.
And the people waited, breathless,
Fearing instant death, or dreading
Something that was strange and awful,
Coming where they least expected.
Days and nights the rumblings reached them,

And the dust and ashes covered,
Like a veil, the trembling islands.
Then the earth grew still and silent,
And the dusky shades uplifting,
Soon revealed a blaze that issued
From old Bering's tossing waters,
Casting long, wide streams of brightness
Far across his dark green bosom ;
Lifting rolls of gas and ashes
Which the winds, both wild and eager,
Caught and carried far to southward,
Sifting as they flew, their burden
O'er the quivering isles and people.
Soon the braver men concluded
They would know what strange creation
Had produced this wild confusion
And the fires that blazed so fiercely ;
So, their light bidarkas launching,
Carefully they neared the stranger,
Which they found to be an islet,
Or a new volcanic structure
Which the earth had forced to notice

Though the sea had barred its passage.
'Twas the earth in mighty travail
That had made the islands tremble ;
And Bogaslov's birth was noted
In the thunderous peals and crashes !*
While his crest of fire was lifting,
Waters seethed and tossed in torture,
Till he rose above the surface
And proclaimed his advent brightly.
There the Aleuts gazed in wonder,
But they dared not near the islet,
For its sides were bathed in lava,
Streaming down in liquid blazes
From the summit to the wave-line
That, with angry hisses, seized them,
Turning glaring light to dimness,
Liquid fire to stones and ashes.
So they left the infant islet
And returned to tell the wonder
Which the throbbing earth had nourished,
Which she charged the sea to cherish.

* See note in Appendix.

Still the mound of rocks grew taller
And extended o'er the sea-waves
Till it gained a height and bound'ry
Large enough to name Bogaslov—
One of Bering's thousand islets.
After years the fires grew dimmer,
Then they turned to smouldering cinders,
But their fierceness left it lonely.—
Neither man nor beast could linger,
For the fervid heat would threaten
To destroy whoever landed.
But the cooling waves have washed it
Till at last the great sea-lions
Sport along its rugged edges,
And the water-birds have found it
Safe retreat to rear their nestlings.
Gulls and geese and daring 'Arries
Make their homes within the ridges
Where sometimes the lava torrents
Poured in streams of ruby brightness.
On the topmost points the eagles
Gaze beyond the tossing billows

O'er the islands, shoals, and islets,
That bedeck the sea's wild bosom,
While Pacific's glistening rollers
Lap around a myriad islands
Who, one day, were born with thunder
As their cradle-song, and blazes
Were their birthday's first announcement!

INDIAN LEGEND OF THE LARGE GLACIER ON STICKEEN RIVER.

IN a mighty mountain fastness
Dwelt a god who ruled the regions
Where the snow and ice and hail-storms,
Where the sleet, that cuts like needles,
And the howling, shrieking north-wind
Bide their time while summer lingers—
Wait, with hard and chill impatience,
For his word to give them empire
Over all the smiling landscape,
Over blooming field and meadows,—
Power to change their tender herbage
Into pale and silent shadows,
And to stay the sparkling ripples

Of each limpid stream and river
Till their waves grow still, as dying
Quells the life-blood in man's bosom.
So he gave command, and, wailing,
Fled the sweet, soft winds of summer.
And from north and east the ice-god
Sent his breath in howling echoes,
Shrieking out, like angry demons,
As from crag to crag they bounded;
Crying out like spirit voices
Through the narrow mountain gorges,
And in sad, complaining whispers
Sighing through the stricken valleys.
Over all, the snow fell, shrouding
Summer's glory with its pallor,
Covering with a pall, so spotless
And so fair, earth's verdant beauty
That 't would seem he half repented
Of the sternness of his mandate—
But he sped his crystal lances
Into stream and mountain torrent,
And the rippling, dancing waters

Froze with terror at his frowning,
While the babbling brook's low murmurs
Made woods lonely with their absence,
And the rivers roared and battled
As they struggled through the channels,
Growing closer and more narrow,
Till the flagging waves grew silent,
Yielding tribute to his kingdom
In their cold and calm surrender.
But old Stickeen knew no orders
But his own, and it was "Onward!"
And he rushed and roared and bounded
On the course he held for ages—
Springing from the cold embraces
Of the ice-king's creeping minions,
Laughing at the north-wind's screaming
As it tried to drown his singing,
And to pearly softness kissing
Snow-flakes dropped upon his bosom.
And the despot heard the cadence,
As it bounded through the cañons—
Heard the singing notes of freedom

That made yielding nature quiver
With a faint, rebellious trembling
Ere she turned to stone-like homage
Of the god whose breath could alter,
At his will, her every feature.
And the anarch bent and listened,
With surprise beyond conception,
To the song Stickeen was shouting,
To his bold, defiant taunting—
And he wondered, for he knew not
Whose the voice and whose the spirit
That could so defy his province,
When all else was awed to stillness !
Listening on, his outraged kingship
Could no longer brook defiance !
He must know what haughty rebel
Dared to hold its own so boldly.
So he buckled on his armor,
Called his chill, obedient vassals,
And set forth to see and vanquish—
Marched abroad to set his signet
On that hardy, traitor minstrel

Who dared break his awful silence !
Forth he crashed, the mountains shaking
With his footsteps' heavy falling,
Gorges ringing with the clangor
Of his crystal shields and lances,
And his armament for storming
Citadel or castle strongholds
Well might bring the most defiant
To his feet in blind submission !
On he sped, a hero chieftain,
Noting not how stark and hoary,
Seeing not how cold and lifeless
Nature's works had bowed before him,
For he heard that river chanting
Its clear war-song as it bounded,
And he longed to hush forever—
Longed to still the sweet vibrations
Of its thousand rippling voices.
On he came, his shadow bending
O'er bold Stickeen's rugged margin,
And he frowned upon the wavelets
As they danced beneath his glances,

Throwing back his great reflection
In a myriad bright contortions,
Turning grim, commanding gestures
To absurd and strange grimaces.
Then his fury knew no limit
And he threw his giant framework
Sheer across the bounding waters,*
Hoping thus to chill their life-flow,
Certain of his strength to cover,
With his cloak of icy texture,
Every vestige of the rebel—
Of the brilliant, dashing traitor !
When the people saw the monster
Span their brave, life-giving river,
Saw him crash upon its surface
All his weight of icy grandeur,—
Then their hearts grew sore within them
And starvation stared before them
In its fearful, painful grimness.
But they listened, and the river
Whispered to them from its prison,—

* See note in Appendix.

Bade them ask the fearful ice-king
What great hostage he demanded.
And he smiled in chill derision,
As he asked them for a maiden
And a chieftain, young and noble,
Who would sacrifice their bodies,
Who would bid farewell to all things
And would float upon the waters
As they flowed beneath his bulwarks,
Crushing close upon their bosoms.
And the maidens drew back frightened,
All but one, whose low voice murmured
That her willing heart was ready
Thus to die to save her people.
And a chieftain bravely answered,
“I will join with her in giving
All that life and youth have granted
That my people may not suffer.”
So they brought a boat and decked it
For that sacrificial voyage,
And they bound the man and maiden—
Firm, but tenderly, they bound them;

Then their death-song rose and lingered
In the air that bore it onward,
In the hearts of those that launched them
On that non-returning voyage !
And they floated down the river—
Down the broad and noble Stickeen—
Till they reached the fatal archway
Of the tyrant's cruel planting,
And they bowed their heads submissive,
But the river held them closely;—
Safe upon his breast he bore them,
While the snow but touched their foreheads
And the ice refused to crush them !
Thus they cleared a gleaming causeway
That made boatmen safe forever.
Safe forever ! though the Glacier
Spans for aye the friendly river,
For its bright, life-giving waters,
Rushing, bounding, wearying never,
Keep that crystal archway open !

CHILKAT LEGEND OF THE RAVEN.

ONCE a great and powerful raven
Pondered on his lone condition
As he gazed around in chaos—
On the cheerless, vague confusion
That held naught of shape or beauty,—
That was dark and wild and gloomful,
Voiceless, and yet strangely soundful,
Featureless, yet held in substance
Particles, that fitted wisely,
Would produce a change most wondrous ;
Drawing forms of graceful contour
Out from shapeless, tumbled masses !
And his great, dark eyes were earnest
As he shook his purple vesture

And outspread his strong, black pinions
Ere he issued forth to gather—
Ventured out to join and fit them—
Those grim piles devoid of structure,
Those unformed and graceless atoms,
Into one great work whose splendor
Should befit its kingly author !
When he spread his wings their blackness
But intensified the shadow
That hung pall-like o'er the turmoil
That he willed should grow and ripen
Under his most wise creation !
Into some great form should ripen,
That the very stars should own it
As a peer in their great system !
Then he carried stones and heaped them
Close upon the water's margin—
Piled them high and firm to meet it—
That black water, lawless rushing,
And to force it into compass,
Stay it till it ceased submerging,
In its endless flow and ebbing,

All the pliant earthy matter—
All the rocks and stones and boulders
That were drawn within the wave-tide,
Tossed, and rolled, and ground together,
Ever changing through its action,
Never from the strife arising
Without seams and scars in witness
How the cruel, restless, waters
Strove to crush them out of being.
Here and there his plan succeeded,
And the sturdy pile resisted,
Though the waters lashed and thundered,
Roared like wrathful beasts an-hungered,
And upheaved their frowning billows,
Hurling them in reckless fury
High against the rocky ramparts
Only to be churned, and foaming,
Thrown upon their wild companions,
Who, uprearing, aimed to deluge
And complete the hopeless ruin !
But sometimes the cunning raven
Left an inlet for the ocean

Here, to form fair bays and inlets,
There, to stretch an arm-like river,
Or a channel deep and narrow ;
And again, to grace his fabrics,
Sent bright streams, like silver liquid,
Rippling forth sweet, tinkling praises
Of his work, so fair and wondrous !
Thus he beautified the structure
And secured for it the life-flood
Without which his bright creation
Soon would fall to dusty rubbish.
Then he spread broad, level spaces
O'er with earth and stone, that crumbled
At his touch, to softest bedding
For the trees and plants and mosses,—
For the shrubs and creeping vine-life
That awoke to see and furnish
Garniture of many tintings
For the raven's lovely dwelling ;
And he formed low, rolling hillocks,
Over-topped with velvet grasses,—
There, a charming vale indented,

Held rich grain in bending tassels;
Here, a towering mountain summit
Kept aloof a snowy fountain
That supplied, in tiny trickles,
Moisture for the thirsty meadow
That outspread beyond his foothold,
Reaching toward another mountain,
Whose grey, rugged sides betokened
That a fiery heart once bounded
Underneath his stony vestments !
How the raven croaked and chattered
As great monsters from the sea-depths
Crawled about his rocky coastline
To inspect his undertaking !
Beasts and birds alike were anxious
To behold so strange an object ;
And they found it so to suit them,
In their many wants and longings,
That they choose to stay there always
And take homes among the pleasures
That the raven, all unconscious,
Had supplied to cheer their coming.

When man came he gazed about him,
Counting all for his belonging,
Seizing and to his own uses
Calling all of earth and ocean !
Then the bird, with pride o'erflowing,
Viewed the work so full and perfect ;
And in fear that some fell monster
Should destroy his grand construction,
On his outspread wings he raised it,—
Raised and held it there supported !
And he still upholds it safely,
Glorying in the noble burden
That his will may cause to prosper
Or to fall in baseless ruin
At the drooping of his pinions !
But the great, black bird holds prestige
Over every strain of mischief,
And if angered he can summon
Forms of evil so terrific
That poor, trembling hearts grow timid
At the mention of his prowess,—
With the terror of his vengeance !



CHILCAT, ALASKA.





Ravens flap their inky feathers
Where they choose, and unmolested
Croak their doleful notes while waiting
For some ebbing life's last quiver,
Till they gorge their noisome bodies
With the fast-decaying tissues
Of some wretch, who fell a victim—
Sacrificed to win forgiveness
For some insult to their monarch.
Each blackbird has open passport,*
Free where'er he wills to wander,
And no hand must dare to check him
Nor molest the sacred envoy.
Sacred, not because of blessings,
But for fear that never slumbers
Of some awful doom to follow,
If, by some fell fate, a raven
Should receive without intention,
Even from an infant Chilkat,
Harm to limb or beak or feather,
Hurt to wing or fetid body.

* See note in Appendix.

Every day the dangers threaten
More and more, because protection
Fast supplies increasing numbers
And so tames the doleful army
That the constant care depresses
All who know and fear the breakage
Of the law that guards the raven.
When one dies his tainted body
Must be raised with reverend action,
Must be duly staked and coffined,
And then left in holy silence
To perform its journey outward
To some other favored dwelling,
Cleared and garnished for his coming.
Thus those poor, soul-darkened Chilkats
Worship with faint hearts, fear laden ;
Live from day to day but asking
Freedom from dread forms of evil,
Wading through old superstitions,
Thankful if each day but gives them
All their savage needs have call for,
And protects them from the horrors

That hang o'er them fierce and threatening,
While their all is resting helpless
On a raven's outspread pinions,
That, if anger-flapped, might drop them
Into darker depths of blackness—
Into woes beyond conception !

THE OWL.

IN the distant town of Sitka
Lived a man—a youthful T'linket—
With his wife and aged mother;
With his wife, both young and comely,
And his mother, old and losing,
With her youth, her power of vision—
Growing blind and weak and helpless.
As the days passed on, one season,
For some cause the fish ran slowly
And the game refused to wander
Where the hunters, watching closely,
Hoped to track the moose and reindeer—
Tried to find a welcome deer-path
Or a moose-track by the water;

Looked in vain for stately antlers,
Even longed in anxious waiting
For the frightened start and whirring
Of some wild birds in the sedges,
Or the far-off call and answer
That should lead them to the shelter
Of the ptarmigan or mallard.
But, alas ! all food was scanty,
And it daily grew more hopeless,
Till the T'linket and his mother
Kept themselves alive with berries
And the roots he dug and carried
To his home, which seemed more dreary,
Day by day, because starvation,
With its bitter, gnawing anguish,
Made the eyes grow large and hollow,
Touched the cheeks with ashy pallor,
And his mother's drooping figure
Bent more sadly as she folded,
Close and tight, the slender fingers
Of the poor, weak hands that ever
As the new day rose, grew thinner

And more claw-like where they rested
On her knees, which faintly trembled
As the life-blood feebly journeyed
In obedience to the dictate
Of her aching heart's pulsation.
Every day the young man hunted,
Every morning found him fishing,
Or in quest of some wild creature
That would serve to stay the hunger
Of his mother, weak and dying,
Of himself, so near despairing.
All the time his wife was cheerful,
And her eyes retained their lustre;
On her cheeks the rich blood painted
Blooming tints of health and beauty,
And her step was light and bounding,
While her rounded figure bore not
Telling trace of fear nor famine.
So her people gazed upon her
As a mortal god-protected,
And they watched her, strangely awe-struck,
That she throve while they were dying!

Sometimes, near the hour of midnight,
From her weary sleep awakening,
Would that starving T'linket mother
Think she smelted the savory essence
Of the fish she craved for sadly;
But her daughter answered sternly
That no fish was near the dwelling
And no fire produced the odor.
Then she shook the trembling creature
And commanded instant silence.
But again she spoke, more eager,
“ You have fish, I smell it plainly,
And I hear the oil that crackles
In the fire so warmly blazing.”
But she answered still more harshly,
“ I have nothing, hush your croaking,
Go to sleep and dream you’re eating
Of the fish you smell so plainly.”
Then she slept, again she wakened,
“ You are eating, for I hear you,
Give me some before I perish ! ”
But the wicked woman answered,

"I am just as you are—hungry—
I am chewing gum I gathered
Where the forest trees were wounded."
But, one night, the poor old woman,
More importunate and wakeful,
Tried the daughter's ebbing patience,
And she hissed, "Yes, you shall have some.
Hold your hand and I will fill it."
And she tore the steaming entrails
From a fish the fire was broiling,
Took them out and crushed them fiercely
In the hand upheld to take them,
Then she closed the feeble fingers
And with cruel force she held them
Till the quivering hand was blistered
And the mother almost fainted
With the pain, and with the pressure
Of the heartless disappointment.
In the morn the soul-sick T'linket
Turned his weary footsteps homeward
From a fruitless night of hunting!
And the wife beheld his coming

With her eyes downcast, but beaming,
With a glance at once defiant
And afraid of coming anger.
But the T'linket listened gravely
To his sobbing mother's story ;
And he soothed her while he whispered
Of his plans for gaining knowledge
Of his wife's most strange behavior ;—
Bound her suffering hand and promised
To unearth the woman's storehouse,
And to give her food to strengthen
And restore her sinking nature.
To his wife he made no mention
Of the tale his mother bore him ;
So she thought that fear had hushed her,
Or that, maybe, in the morning
She had quite forgot the burning
And had blamed her injured member
On some cruel spirit's charming.
But her husband lingered near her,
Though he feigned to make a journey ;
So when midnight came he watched her

As she sought the sea-side swiftly,
As she neared the rocks that bordered
On the sea where fishes sported
In the clear and dancing water.
Then she cut some slender branches
And she waved them straight before her,—
Waved them o'er the glinting water
And toward the rocky shore-line,
Till the herrings paused, and turning,
Yielded to her witch-like charming,
From their native water bounded,
And upon the rocks lay panting—
At her feet they flung their beauty,
Shining in the twinkling starlight,
Bright as silver, newly graven.
Then she gathered all she needed,
Threw the rest far out to fatten,
And return, when called to cater
To her greed so bold and selfish.
Still he watched her as she carried
To her home the gleaming herring;
Gazed upon her while she cooked them

In the fire his hands had kindled,—
While she ate the savory morsels
And he heard his mother praying
For one fish to ease her hunger!
Yet his wife refused her—lying
To the blind and helpless mother
Meanwhile, wasting what would feed her,
What would give her strength and comfort!
So he waited till the daylight,
Then came home as if returning
From another night of waiting
For the game that would not hasten
To the snares that gaped to seize them ;
For the fish that slyly darted
Far beyond the fisher's spear-hook,
Or the nets that waved like banners,
As the waters moved them lightly,
Trammeled not by cod nor grayling;
But he brought a hair-seal, bursting
With the fat that steals the senses,
That when eaten causes stupor
To enlock the brain and muscles.

So he caused his wife to eat it,
And, despite her strong refusal,
He compelled her still to swallow
Till she slept, and knew no waking
Until midnight passed and daylight
Found her listening to his summons
To repair, with hasty footsteps,
To his boat, which, heavy laden,
Waited for her swift unloading.
Loaded down with silvery herring
His canoe she found, and also
Found that he had somewhere stolen
From herself the art she practised.
Then she dropped, and calling faintly,
Begged him send the fishing baskets ;
But he would not, and she, stubborn,
Would not go herself to get them.
Then she sat all day beside them—
The canoe and glistening herring—
On the sand she sat till nightfall,
Till the moon's pale beams aroused her,
When she rose, and turned to wander

In the mountain gulch that offered
Safe retreat to one whose feelings
Were so wildly touched, and warring
With each other in her bosom !
But she wearied in the pathway
And a great stone stood inviting,
So she dropped upon it, hoping
To regain her strength and hasten
On her way towards the mountains.
As she sat her clothing fluttered—
Turned to soft and spotted feathers—
While her form assumed the contour
Of a bird with greedy talons,
And her head, beyond all question,
Told that she who once was human
Had become an owl, whose hooting
Would awake the midnight echoes ;
Who would hide away in sunlight,
But would make the night-time gloomy
With her weird and sad voice calling
When all nature should be resting !
And the waiting husband wondered

Why his Klootchman dared to tarry !
Then he went to find the truant,
But he found her not, nor ever
Saw her face, nor heard her answer,
Though he called, so long and loudly,
That the mountain voices grumbled
When he waked their sleeping echoes !
But he heard an owl's weird calling,
And he saw two lights that glittered
Fiercely, hatefully, upon him
Through the midnight's gloomful stillness !

YEHL.

ONCE, before the world was lighted—
While it still in darkness lingered—
Some poor wand'lers tried to find it,
Sought to gain a place to rest in—
But the blackness lowered so sternly
That they failed to find a harbor,
And they traveled, groping feebly
For the earth and all its comforts,
Which, so distant, seemed most gracious.
In this time there lived a T'linket
With his sister and her children,
With his wife he loved so fondly
That no work should soil her fingers,
That her graceful form should never

Bend beneath a woman's burden.
But the T'linket's love was shaded
With a jealous taint that made him
Guard his wife with careful watching.
So he kept a close surveillance,
Kept a troop of kun, of red-birds—
Eight bright red-birds hovered round her,
Ready always to escort her
And to catch the slightest pretext
For a message to her husband,
Who, when absent, seemed expecting
Some dark cloud to break above him—
Some black cloud to burst upon him.
Once a stranger passed the doorway
And addressed the T'linket's Klootchman,
And she answered, fearing nothing,
For her heart was true and faithful.
But the red-birds flew and whispered
In the husband's ear the story;
When his jealous rage so kindled,
That he made a box to hide her
From the eyes of all creation!

Even when his sister's children
Gazed upon his wife, his idol,
Wild with ire he fell upon them,
Slew them all and left his sister
With a spirit sadly broken,
With a heart so sore with sorrow
That she walked beside the ocean—
That she wandered by the seashore,
Weeping, wailing for her darlings,
Till the very fishes sought her
And, in pity, bade her tell them
Why with grief her heart was filling,
Why her tears were shed so freely?
So she told the fate so cruel,
That her brother's rage had brought her,
And the whale, who asked the questions,
Filled with pity, bade her swallow
From the beach a stone, and with it
Drink some water from the ocean.
This she did, and days passed, gently
Healing, as it fled, her heart-wounds,
Till in time a son was born her.

One bright son she bore and held him
To her heart with fondest passion!
Then she hid him from her brother,
From his hideous, vengeful temper.
Yehl, this son she nearly worshipped,
Grew in strength and beauty daily,
Grew in man's estate, and in him
Throbbed a heart with love o'erflowing
For his mother and her people,
Whom he saw in darkness groping,
Whom he watched, and strong with pity
Swore to make their lives more wholesome,
Vowed to make a happy ending
To their long and heart-sick waiting.
So he sought the chief who prisoned
In his boxes moon and starlight,—
Who enclosed the fair light given
Under boxes strongly guarded,
So that none should see their brightness,
Or beneath their warmth grow cheerful.
Yehl, with thoughtful visage, lingered
Near those boxes, tightly fastened,

While his brain with plans was active
Till they grew to fair proportions,—
Till they ripened for the bidding
Of his strong right hand to open
And dispel, for once and always,
All the gloom that held in bondage
Earth and sea and every creature !
So he watched his time, then opened
Hastily but sure the prisons;
Let the stars and moon ride upward
Till they gemmed the skies awaiting,—
Till they each assumed the places
Which his gentle will assigned them.
Tenderly the starlight glimmered,
While the moon with silver tintings
Rode triumphant, smiling brightly
O'er the features nature offered—
O'er the mountains, hills and valleys,
And the rivers, streams and ocean.
Mankind, meanwhile, stunned with wonder,
Scarcely dared to own the blessing
That the noble Yehl had given

To repay them for their patience.
Further still to prove his honor,
And to show his love was boundless,
Forth the sun-god issued proudly !
On he sped, the whole earth spanning,
Shedding everywhere such splendor
That the eyes of all were dazzled !
Some so startled with his glory,
Sped with fear before his presence,
And within the waters plunging
Sought to hide from light so glaring !
Yehl, in mercy, saw their terror
And the fearful danger threatened,
For the struggling forms were sinking,
Drowning, in the rushing waters ;
Then he spoke, and all grew calmer,
And he touched the glistening waters,
When the people sunk within them
Turned to fishes, great or smaller,
Changed to golden trout or salmon,
Or to whales, or flying dolphins !
And they swam and sported gayly

While the sunlight made them glitter
With rare scales of gold and silver
By the waters finely burnished.
Others, fleeing to the mountains,
Lost their way and wandered wildly,—
Sought but could not find the footways
That would lead them down and homeward;
So to graceful deer he changed them—
Some to goats and deer with antlers—
Others, flying straight before him,
Turned to birds of glowing plumage,—
While the people watched his actions,
Saw his power and fell before him—
Fell to worship at his footstool !
But he longed not for such homage,
So he waited sometime longer,
Till all earth was calm and peaceful—
Till the T'linkets longed for nothing
But his tender hand supplied them.
Then he sped away to hide him
In a home beyond earth's shadows,—
In his home so bright, so radiant,

There he dwells, forever guarding
With most gentle care his people;
But not they, nor bird, nor spirit,
E'er can reach his great dominion,
E'er can reach his glorious presence!

MOUNT EDGECUMBE.

LONG ago, when time was younger,
Ere the years had made him hoary
With the snows of lingering winters,
With the ripening rays of summer—
Long before the freezing north-wind,
Ever spreading wide his mantle,
Threw it o'er his head so thickly
That the sweet south-wind could never
Kiss away the hoary shadows—
Melt away the pale, gray year-marks
That around his head have gathered
Like a halo of the ages,—
Like a silver, shining halo,—
Telling of the passing ages !

Time was young and earth was lovely ;
Bearing on her swelling bosom,
Holding in her teeming lowlands
All that man might need or long for,
All that heart of man could wish for.
Lofty peaks in snow-capped grandeur
Loomed above the smiling valleys,
Guarded well the smiling meadows,
Threw their shadows on the waters,
In the rippling, sparkling rivers,
'Till the fishes, darting upward,
Seemed to feel that night had fallen :
And the silent Siwash, watching,
Swiftly caught the shining greylings
As they turned in frightened wonder—
Turned and plunged in trembling terror
When they found the sun still shining
Here and there in golden patches—
Changing into gold and jewels
Here and there the dancing waters.
Time was young and earth was gladsome
With her crown of noble forests,



WALK NEAR INDIAN RIVER.



With the dark and waving banners
Of her wind-defying pine-trees,
With her soft-plumed, bending spruces
And the sombre, songless branches
Of the stately, perfumed cedars
Marking with their darker verdure
Brighter emerald on the hill-tops,
Richer tints of verdant beauty
In the fair and peaceful valleys !
Over all were peace and plenty
Springing from the earth's fair store-house,
Bounding from the crystal bosom
Of the sea and lakes and rivers,
Of the broad, life-teeming roadways
That between the isles and mainland
Ever restlessly rushed onward.
But a cloud arose one morning,
Dark and fierce it rose, and darker,
Shading all the smiling valleys
With its wild and angry frowning ;
Binding with a band of blackness
Mountain-top and sea-crag summit,

Bending low above the waters,
Churning into foam their billows,
Lashing into wildest fury
Mountain winds and ocean voices !
'Till the frightened Siwash calling
Heard no answer but the lashing
And the fearful, angry wildness
Of the driving rain, and screaming
Of the birds and beasts that echoed
Back again in fierce confusion
From the trembling crags and mountains !
Then the lovely earth grew weary
Of the darkness and the fierceness,
Of the wild and bleak commotion,
And she sank beneath the waters—
Sank until the waters shrouded
All her beauty in their blackness,
And they rose above her hill-tops !—
Mounted to her loftiest land-points,
Sweeping life and hope before them,
Like the falling leaves of autumn
Fly before the chilling north-wind !

Then a few despairing people
Caught the floating logs of cedar,
Seized the fragrant logs and bound them
Close together for a life-raft,
That might hold them till the tempest,
Raging still, had spent its anger.
But no float might brave the storm-king,
For he tore the raft asunder—
Broke in two the raft of cedars
And then hurled the parts so distant
That the fathers and the mothers
Never met again—and children
Never heard the plaintive voices
That were calling, wildly calling,
Answered only by the tempest
And the shrill winds' taunting echo!
Through the darkness and the wildness
Chethel held his sister closely—
Fast and close he stayed beside her,
Till a stronger wave and blacker
Tore her from his fond protection—
Seized and bore her from her brother—

Tho' he bravely strove to hold her !
And the dark waves tossed her onward,
Far beyond his frantic calling !—
Far away from brave young Chethel,
Tho' he sought her in the darkness,
Tho' he called her name so loudly !
“Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon,” in echoes
Was the only sound that answered,
Tho' in wild despair he shouted
Till the mad waves paused to listen
And the fierce winds bore his message
“Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon, my sister,
You will never see your brother,
You may watch and wait till suntide
And your eyes will not find Chethel !
You may gaze far into midnight
And you will not see me ever !
But my voice will echo round you,
Now and always will you hear me !”
Then he threw his arms up wildly,
And they changed to mighty pinions,
And his form grew free and bird-like

As he tried his limbs, new feathered ;
Then he flapped his great wings proudly,
Turned his eager eyes to south-ward,
And he flew to south and west-ward
Where no watching eye could follow,
Where the anxious, gazing T'linkets
Could no longer see young Chethel !
Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon was carried
By the rushing, surging billows—
Borne along as splintered timber,
Tosses in the storm-threshed waters,
'Till she touched a rugged stone-point
On the side of towering Edgecumbe :—
Touched the earth, that seemed to quiver
At the fall of every footstep.
But she fought the billows bravely
And she climbed the lofty summit,
Reached the mountain-top, and rested
On the brow of mighty Edgecumbe.
Suddenly the mountain opened !—
Burst its stony crown and gathered
To its heart the girl, storm weary—

Took into its rugged bosom
Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon, the lost one !
There she rested and grew stronger :
Strong she grew and good and noble,
For she seized the earth's supporter,
Clasped and held the trembling pillar,
Raised the earth above the waters,
Held it firmly, while the rivers
Once more sought their earth-bound channels !
Stronger held it while the verdure
Softly crept o'er mount and valley,
While the saddened T'linkets wandered,
Looking for their homes and people !
While the Sitkan, the Alaskan
Longed in vain for kindred voices !
Still she held it. Peace and plenty
Once more smiled beneath the sunlight :
Men and women ceased repining
And their old pursuits and pleasures
Grew upon them, till they wondered
If that awful time of darkness,
Wild with terror and confusion,

Had not seemed far worse than being !
Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon,* still holding
Fast and strong the mighty pillar,
Sees the teeming land grow richer,
Hears the chanting of the wind-gods,
Knows the paeons of earth-voices,
And her noble heart grows better,
And her arms, as strong as iron,
Firmer clasp the earth's foundations,
Guarding it against the spirits
That would crush its new-found beauty !—
That would fain destroy the millions
Which are nurtured in its bosom !
Fierce and long they rage, and struggling,
Shake the earth from rim to centre—
Rock it with their angry battling,
Till it sways almost to falling !
Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon is mighty—
And she holds it fast and stronger ;
And the earth may smile and increase,
For her care will never waver !

* See note in Appendix.

Ne'er the world again knew Chethel
As the dark-eyed man and brother,
But the great bird, Kunna-kaht-eth,
Holds his spirit in its keeping.
There he dwells upon the mountain,
Where his sister disappearing,
Left the sign that led him to her,—
Left a hollow for his nest-place,
Where his home might be forever.
When he calls upon his sister,
When his wild heart longs to greet her,
Loud and high his voice re-echoes
And the listening earth grows troubled—
Trembling in the threatening tempest
That his sounding tones awaken !
On the black storm-cloud he rushes,
Sporting in its sunless grandeur,
Bathing in its inky vapors,
Till his giant wings grow heavy;
Then he flaps them, and their thunder
Shakes each frowning crag and mountain !
And the ruffling of his pinions

Rumbles far o'er vale and hill-top,
Waking with their angry rustlings
Throbbing answers in earth's heart-beats.
And his eagle-eyes flash boldly;
Far and wide their lightning quivers !
Thro' the blackest cloud he rushes
And their riven sides turn livid—
Blazing with the fiery flashes
Of the great, bold eyes of Chethel,
That gaze out beneath the eyelids
Of the Osprey—Kunna-kaht-eth !

BARANOV CASTLE.

COUNT Baranov's niece was lovely,
With a sweet and gentle beauty
That could win the faith of princes,
One of whom beheld and loved her,—
Watched her as she graced the castle
With her tall and slender figure,
With her smile so rare and winsome,
And her face, whose each emotion
Bade the pure young blood flow brightly,
Or recede from cheek and forehead.
In each change she seemed the fairer,
So that hearts, who loved her fondly,
Perfect thought her, whether pallid
As the lily's spotless petal,

Or when roses chased each other
On her cheeks' transparent surface.
As he gazed his heart grew fonder,
And her voice, with silvery music,
Held him in such sweet enchantment
That he longed to win and wed her.
So he asked the bluff, old baron,
Who was guardian of the maiden,
And he gave consent, nor questioned,
If the girl was pleased or willing.
Swelled with pride, the count informed her
Of her gay and brilliant future,
Of the court that should be grander
With her as its regal princess.
But the girl grew pale as marble,
And her voice refused to answer,
While her heart's tumultuous throbbing
Caused her breath to rise and flutter
As a bird, whose nest is stolen,
Or whose mate is dead or wounded.
With surprise the count surveyed her,
As she stood so sadly shaken ;

Then he frowned and soon demanded
Why she stood so pale and silent ?
Why she did not smile, and wonder
How such great and noble fortune
To her simple lot had fallen ?
Then she spoke, " I cannot wed him,
For I love the young lieutenant,
Whose bright face and noble courage
You so oft have praised and noticed."
Then he stormed ! The girl grew paler,
And he swore ! She heard, but moved not ;
Then he tried persuasive reason,
But she shook her head and whispered
That her troth was far too sacred,
That she dared not break her promise,
Nor become the bride of splendor,
When her heart, with truth and fervor,
Clung to one who loved her fondly.
Then the burly count turned gentle
And with cunning, cold and cruel,
Seemed to give consent, if surely
He would find a proof convincing

Of the young lieutenant's honor.
So he called the man and plied him
With a host of earnest questions,
While the noble youth made answers
Which gave proof of honest purpose.
Then he grasped his hand and bade him
Always be so brave and truthful,
And he left them, gay and joyous,
While he sought the prince and told him
That his niece was highly flattered
With the great, the noble honor!
But she begged his princely pardon,
“If she asked his august favor
Till she felt more calm, and equal
To return a tranquil message.”
And the prince, in no wise doubtful,
Sent the word that never reached her—
“That his heart should wait her answer
With such fondness as should lead her
To make haste, and bid him welcome
As her faithful friend and lover.”
Now, for days, the world seemed fairer

To the girl and earnest soldier,
Whose increasing duties promised
Quick promotion, and a station
Where his bride should share his quarters.
But one day the sky was clouded,
Though the cause was bright with promise.
He was called upon a mission
That would lead to such advancement,
That their wildest dreams had never
Even thought to see accomplished !
Even so, the parting pained them
With a strange and dull foreboding,
That left each with pallid features
And a heart whose every motion
Seemed to lift a painful burden.
He was gone ! and now the baron,
With such haste as proved him heartless,
Urged the girl by taunt and railing—
By command and threats of vengeance
On herself and absent lover—
To receive the prince and treat him
As his royal state demanded.

So the maiden, sad and wearied,
With her fierce and long contention,
And assured her absent soldier
Should be sent to die in bondage,—
That a dark, Siberian dungeon
Would receive and hold him safely,
Where no word of hers should find him ;
But that news must reach him surely,
“She had changed her love as calmly
As his hand would change a gauntlet !”—
Wearily and sadly yielded—
Yielded, though her heart was breaking !
So her wedding-day was splendid
With the lights and wedding favors,
With a feast, whose every viand
Held its own unrivaled richness !
And the gay brocade and jewels
Flashed and gleamed in royal splendor,
While the courtiers danced and worshiped
At the shrine of youth and beauty.
But the bride looked white as snow-drift
And her lovely eyes were tearful,

Though her proud and artful uncle
Bade her wake and grace the wedding
With sweet smiles and rosy blushes.
When the prince and she were standing
To receive congratulations,
Through the hall there strode a soldier,
Travel-stained and pale as ashes;
And his eyes were dark and sunken,
And his hair across his forehead
Damp as dew, and clinging closely.
Through the crowd he rushed! not heeding
Whom he pressed aside or jostled,
Till he stood before the lady.—
Then he seized her hand, and gazing
On the ring so surely telling
That his love was lost forever!—
Paused awhile, then firmly grasping
From his breast a jeweled dagger,
Swift as thought her life-blood followed
One strong stroke, that aimed as truly
As a practiced swordsman weapon
Touched the heart he hoped to gladden!—

Killed the girl he hoped to cherish !
Shrieks and curses, loud and awful,
Made the banquet hall re-echo ;
And the soldier wild and haggard,
Gazed upon the bride, then, turning,
Left the room, no hand to stay him,
For his deed had stunned their senses !
Mad with fierce and frenzied anguish,
Quick as thought he sought the water ;
There his brain, with grief o'erburdened,
And his wounded heart soon rested
From the world's deceitful troubles !
But the girl's fair spirit wanders
Up and down the gloomy hall-ways,
When the years' unerring cycles
Bring to mind that eve so fatal.
There she walks, her silken garments
Rustling as they sweep behind her,
And her eyes with tears are glist'ning
While her hands are clasping closely
O'er the wound that loosed her spirit
From a cold and loveless bondage.

And when storms arise at midnight,
Lashing into foam the billows,
When the wind-sobs, low and mournful,
Make the nights more sad and lonely,
Then she stands and holds a lantern
From the castle's ancient turret,
Toward the waves, till morn awakens—
That her love may not be saddened
With the cruel storm and darkness.

THE SILENT CITY.

SILENCE reigns, except the booming
Of the glaciers' wild artill'ry !
And the rushing roar and splashing
Of the new-born floes and icebergs,
That resound with bold intensesness
Through the northern cold and stillness—
Now and then again repeating—
While a grand, majestic quiet
Strives to hold complete possession
Of the bay and icy mountains.
Night has passed away, its phantoms
Glide along and leave no traces,—
Not a shade is left to witness
Of their still, their ghost-like presence ;

For the pale, sweet smile of morning
Shames them with its tranquil beauty.
Now it draws the mists toward it,
Tinting every brilliant globule,
Painting every tiny spray-drop,
With its own translucent fairness.
Up they rise toward the ether,
Leaving rarely clear the landmarks
And the bay's tide-rippled waters,
Pausing for awhile above them
Like a frail, ethereal flooring—
When behold ! a town, a city,
Rests upon the baseless structure !
Buildings, planned by those who never
Thought their craft should gain such witness,
Rise to meet the calm inspection
Of the still and stormless dawning !
One, an ivy-grown cathedral,
Fashioned when the world was younger,
Bearing on its walls the tide-marks
That the rolling years have printed ;
And in contrast, strangely jarring

With the mellow roof and gables,
Rise great scaffoldings and ladders
Compassing the superstructures
Which will loom above its stature,
Lifting towers, whose stately outlines
Can but make its beauty grander,
And its walls more firmly age-proof.
There an edifice shows boldly
Near the old cathedral's shadow,
And a breathing space lies open,
Which may be a verdant common,
Where the city's weary children
Find a touch of smiling nature
Waiting to relieve the dullness
Of the never changing routine
That awaits them as a birth-right,
Long before their hands are able
To perform the tasks before them,
Long before their hearts are willing
To forego all earthly pleasures
For the sake of cheerless duty.
Through the town a river travels,

Bearing on its breast the shipping
Which stands out in brave distinctness
In Alaska's ghostly city !
Strangely clear each standing object
Looms among its silent neighbors,
With no sign of life to mar it
Of its own peculiar features !
Clearer, brighter still, each building,
More distinct and fair each ship-mast
Seems to palpitate with brilliance
And in glorious tints to quiver !
Then they sway, as if the ocean
Held them on its restless bosom,
And they rock, and seem to tremble
With some inward, chill commotion ;
Then they slowly bend, and totter
On their once secure foundations,
And they sink from wondering vision,
Sink in quivering oscillations
As a vessel wrecked, disabled !—
As the sea engulfs a shipwreck,
So the mists, a shimmering vortex,

Seize and bear the spectre city
Far from sight, with not a vestige
Left to note its wondrous presence !
And the morning rises fairer
While its bright, coquettish glances
Break o'er glinting peaks and grottoes—
Beam along the glacier edges—
And its blushes, pure and rosy,
Spread along the sky, and, bending,
Gleam on every wave and ripple ;
But they find no trace to tell them
Of that weird, ethereal city,
Of that silent, phantom city !

CLIFF-BUILDERS.

OUT in Bering's Sea, King's Island
Rears its great, basaltic bulwarks,
Sheer from out the surging waters,
That forever rush and tumble
From the sea, whose angry billows
Roll in giant, roaring columns,
Like a mighty army thundering
At the gates of some great fortress !
So they heave their mad artillery
At the frowning rocks that break them
Into spray and foam and bubbles,—
Shatter them to glittering atoms,
As a mighty hand could shiver
With one stroke a crystal goblet !

Then the vanquished waves receding,
Meet with grander reinforcements,
Panting, eager for the contest,
Who, with wild, exultant voices,
Plunge against those splintered columns
That repulse their maddest lashing,
Calmly mark the swift receding
And remain in cold abeyance,
Waiting for each daring onslaught,
Conscious of the flint-like nature
That has held through passing ages
And for ages more will keep it,—
That lone, dreary, storm-swept station
In the restless, tossing sea-road.
So the waves grow never weary,
And the rocks refuse surrender,
While their warring leaves no landing
For the ships that sail so proudly—
Ships that find a port awaiting
In some cove or quiet inlet
On those sister islands, dotting
With their crests, these mingled waters.

On this islet's crown no mortal
Could withstand the fiendish fury
Of the winds which seem to gather
All their wildest, fiercest charges,
And to hurl them, mad with anger,
At their own insane endeavors,
Sweeping o'er the dark, grey fragments
Of the rocks, that lie like portions
Of some grand columnar temple,
Broken by an earthquake's quiver !
Not a blade of grass nor flower—
Not the clinging hardy mosses—
Nor a shade of gracious verdure
Decks Ookivok's rugged forehead.
Nothing green, except the tinting
Of the rocks themselves, that sometimes
Show a cold and brownish olive
When the sunlight stoops to kiss them
And bestow his royal brightness,
Rich in life-producing showers.
Only hardy fungus, sprouting,
Takes its life from sun and water,

And with wondrous strength holds closely
Round those columns, roughly chiseled,—
Closely clasps its leathery bosses,
Here, within a sheltered crevice ;
There it spreads its dusky mantle
On a rock, storm-seared and rugged,
And no power can loose its fibres,
For, if ruthless hands should tear it,
Either grasping, rocky fragments
Loose their hold upon the cliff-crests,
Or the fungus-heart holds faster,
Though its outward form be broken,
And its darkly polished surface
Goes to tell the silent story
Of its lonely, storm-swept birth-place.
Winter spreads its downy covering,
But the sighing winds uplift it,
And the briny spray, uptossing,
Soon destroys its virgin whiteness.
While the summer days are darkened
With the misty, rolling fog-banks,
That are born of close commingling

Of the Arctic's ice-chilled current,
And the mild, soft waters flowing
From the distant shores of Asia.
Those frail objects, clinging, nest-like,—
Like a swallow's nest suspended,
Are the summer homes of mortals,
Men and women and their children,
Who have built those strange cliff-houses
With strong planks, which serve as platforms,
Held securely in their places
By great spikes of bone, imbedded
In the iron rocks that keep them;
While they form the sides and roofing
Of the ribs of whale or walrus,
With the shoulder-blades and side-ribs
Of the prey they live by catching;
These they fasten firm and strongly,
Tied with tendons of the walrus
On two pegs of bone, deep driven
In the stones, that hold them safely
Thro' wild storms however fearful.
Then they make an awning shelter

Of the toughest hides, that held them,—
Those great bones and iron tendons,
While the beasts were living monsters.
All around they place a railing,
To prevent a dreadful falling
When the tempests rock these eyries,
Homes of dark-faced human vultures.
Here they live with all their household,
Through the short and misty summer,
Always on the look-out, watching
For the whale that must supply them
With its bones and flesh and blubber,
Shelter, meat and drink combining
With strong articles for barter.
Or they mark the clumsy walrus
As it floats along while sleeping
On the cakes of ice that lull it
Into deeper, safer slumber.
These they hunt with wondrous cunning,
And with strength surpassing Nimrod's,
They secure the flesh for eating,
Hide for clothing, shoes and shelter,

And the large, fierce tusks of ivory,
For the traders' eager dealing.
At the season's close they gather
All they need of wares for traffic,
And secure them in their ky-acks,—
Boats as light as cork, and graceful,
But so sea-proof that old Neptune
Rarely finds one, or its inmates,
Caught within his briny meshes.
There the Mah-le-moot takes passage
In his boat with oars uplifted,
While two friends, with nerves of iron
And with sinews braced for effort,
Seize the boat with precious cargo,
And, in time propitious, throw it
Far beyond the yawning breakers,
Out to sea beyond the surges !
Swiftly spins the bounding ky-ack,
While the oars propel it lightly
And the Mah-le-moot's dark visage
Beams with thoughts of trades successful
And a safe return to kindred.

When the hunting time is over,
And drear winter takes his sceptre,
Into caves within the rock's face—
Cut with patient, tiresome labor,
Close beside their summer eyries,
Moves each savage and his children,
Wife and chattels and his fortune,
Great or less, as fate has favored
Or denied successful catches ;—
Whether traders have been eager
Or refused the offered bargains.
Safe within these stony caverns,
Through the long and dismal winter,
Through the bitter, cheerless passage
Of the days and nights, so shadowed
That to-morrow's faint uprising
Seems but weary moments lengthened
From the skirts of days departed
That have left their shadows trailing.
Safely housed, those daring hunters
Spend the winter, but how dreary !
What a life, so fraught with danger,

Or so dulled with sunless cycles !
Muffled thunders from the sea-god,
Or faint shrieks of storm-winds clashing
Echoing through the dark recesses
Are the only signs that enter
To proclaim a world still moving !
And the summer's yearly entrance,
Sees the old routine lived over,
Fraught with dull, unerring sameness ;
But that some may be more reckless
And increase their store of produce,
While another's hand, age-weakened,
Falls below his yearly income.
Rocked by winds forever screaming
Round their heads in fiercest voices,
While the sea, so far beneath them,
Leaps as if to seize their strongholds
And engulf them in the madness.—
With what voices are they gifted
That can hold their daily converse
In this constant din that nature
Uses in her wild communing ?

Do those Mah-le-moots know nothing
Of the sweet and tender beauty
That invites and offers home-room
On the land so near them lying ?
Do the tiny souls out-gazing
Find enough of joy and gladness,—
See enough of wondrous grandeur
To delight their waking vision ?
Can it be that barren islet—
Cold and bare and tempest beaten,
Walled around with endless surges
And forever gulfed in clamor—
Holds enough to make the dwellers
Love their home and cherish fondly
All the sounds that seem so jarring ?
Are their homes, we hold so cheerless,
Just as dear as those we cherish ?
And do tender hearts beat wildly
For that island home when absent,
As our hearts would ache with longing
For the land we claim so proudly ?
No one answers. But they travel

And return as years roll onward,
As the eagle seeks its eyrie,
Or the swallow seeks its nest-place !
We may bid them come and offer
What to us is worth desiring,
And they turn away disgusted
At those gifts of our bestowing.
It is well, if they but answer
And accept the golden sunshine
That can pierce and cheer the darkest
Of their weird and lonely caverns,
That can gleam in endless brightness
Through the mists and clouds and fog-banks
In a rare and glad effulgence,
Reaching far beyond the shadows,
Out beyond life's troubulous breakers !

TAKU INLET.

HERE the channel's waters spreading
Turn toward the land, and find it
So entrancing in its fairness,—
So stupendous in its grandeur !
Find its ice-bound coast so willing
To receive their bright advances,
That they lie in sheets of silver
At the feet of lofty ice-peaks—
Peaks uplifting dazzling foreheads,
Crested here and there, where streamlets
Stealing all their liquid beauty
From the pure dissolving snow-banks—
From some glacier's dissolution—
Trickle noiselessly and swiftly

O'er their stately brows, now seaming
Lines as deep as care has graven
Over brows less clear and lofty ;
Now, with bright, capricious fancy,
Smoothing out deep lines and wrinkles
That but recently seemed fastened
Inerasable and changeless !
Cliffs and crags, all sharply gleaming
Underneath an icy covering,
Stand like sentries, gravely guarding
Grander crags, cliffs more imposing,
That in ages past were torrents
Rushing onward, wild, impetuous !—
Till the north wind's breath swept fiercely
O'er them all and made them silent,
And restrained their onward progress !
Yet they go, with stealthy motion,
Out to join the sister waters,
Carrying in their undercurrent
Stones, and ore, and rounded boulders,
Silvery sand, and broken sea-shells ;
While above the glistening giants
Proudly stand—then sway and totter,

As they lose their safe foundation
On the friendly rocks and sand-banks,
And with crashing, deep-toned voices,
Suddenly they plunge so deeply
In the fair, transparent water,
That they seem to pass forever
From the gorgeous sunlight flashing
Or the tender moon's reflection ;
But they rise again, more brilliant
From the inlet's quivering bosom !—
And each starts, a silent wand'rer,
Out from home to deeper waters !
One lone islet, bare and shoal-like,
Save a straggling growth of spruces,
And a few poor, stunted pine trees,
Seems to watch the deep, blue waters
And the glaring bergs and ice-floes
As they each in quick succession,
Break away from parent glaciers,
And so proudly take their passage
That will lead to naught but danger,
And to wave-worn dissolution !
Only here and there a cedar

Stands along the shore, as guardsman,
And a few pale ferns bend outward
Near the rippling, tinted waters ;
But the floes and bergs increasing
In their numbers, outward sailing
Only tip them coldly, lightly,
As they float away forever !

See the dark blue water shaded
With the gently moving cloud-sails,
Dotted o'er with tiny hillocks
Capped with snow, and swiftly coursing
Here and there, as winds and current
Drive them forth like down from thistles;
Graced with towering icy mountains
Sailing in majestic grandeur,
Undisturbed by whirling eddies
Or by wandering northern breezes.

As a snow-white flock attended
By a hand that cannot guide them—
As a flock of swans, as graceful
As the fleecy clouds above them—
And a herder resting, awe-struck,
At their beauteous, shining plumage,

And their slowly onward movements—
So they seem, that lonely island
And those ocean-bound battalions,
Moving on, as years roll onward—
Brightly, faithfully fulfilling
All their destiny has ordered,
Though it be to lose their glory,
Merge their forms, their very being
In a stream, that makes them equal—
In a tide that ne'er will render,
E'en the grandest, back its splendor,
Nor the fairest form its beauty!
Eyes behold this ice-gemmed inlet
With its single island sentry,
And the rainbow tints, that quiver
From its frozen crags and mountains,
When the sun-rays glance upon them;
With its flocks of snow and silver
Sailing on, and onward always—
And it seems no fairer picture
E'er can greet the eager gazer!
'Till the azure gates shall open
Naught so pure can greet their vision!

MUIR GLACIER.

- - - - -

BRIGHT Alaska ! fair and lovely !
In her robes of shaded emerald,
In her flashing, bounding rivers,
In her snow-capped mountain ranges—
Flashes out new forms of beauty
As we course along her channels;
Rounding rugged promontories,
Underneath whose craggy shadows
Limpid mirrors lie, reflecting
Every point and seam and crevice,
Every spray of moss and lichen.—
When we cleave her straits, so narrow
That almost we fear the mountains,
As they lean so far above us,



SECTION OF MUIR GLACIER.



That they seem like friends drawn closely,
Whispering words of tragic meaning.
Living, gay, pulsating summer,
Quivering 'neath the sun's warm glances,
Giving place to cooler climate
As we hie along her borders ;
Viewing now and then a vista
Calmly, beautifully peaceful ;
And now breathless, gazing upward
Toward the giant mountain ranges,
Toward volcanoes, seamed and hoary!—
Every day's swift revolution
Changing barley beards for poppies,
Shadowy spruce for silent cedar ;—
On the mountain side exposing
Dazzling snows for vines a-tangle,
Silvery moss for waving grasses,
As she gaily beckons northward,
Leading on so gently, chaining
Heart and brain in sweet enchantment
Until verdant hills and valleys,
Tree-crowned mountain-tops and cañons

All are left! It seems a fairy
Might have breathed the magic "Presto!"
When we round the point and enter
Glacier Bay, Muir glacier's harbor!
Cold and clear, the bay's bright bosom
Gleams beneath the azure draping
That the bending sky spreads o'er it,
Flecked with clouds of pearl and silver.
Near the shadowy shore the waters
Change to glittering green, that flashes
Like a sparkling group of jewels,
Save where glacial undercurrents
With their milk-like burden mingle,
Turning polished tints to opal,
Pale and lustreless, but lovely.
Silence reigns! the awful stillness
Like a phantom presence lingers,
All unseen, but felt so plainly
That it seems to touch the senses,
Muffling every bounding heart-throb,
Every breath that seems to quiver
With a strange, unnamed expectance,

Almost painful in its tenseness.
Not a leaf is there to answer
To the wind's loud salutation,
Not a bird to flee in terror
As we near the glittering mountains ;
Not a beast to growl defiance
If we scale the chill embankments !
Far away the mountain ranges
Pile in wild, unclassed confusion,
Ragged peaks, extinct volcanoes,
Rounded knolls and wave-like hillocks
Clustering near or stretching outward
Far beyond our wondering vision :
Snow-clad all, or maybe shining
Underneath an icy garment.—
Glacier, cliff and mountain shoulder,
Leaning close against the other,
By the ice-keen chisels blended,
Until ice and stone are welded
In a firm, eternal union.
Crash and boom ! the silence wakens
With a shock, whose mighty roaring



Rends the clouds with thunderous pealing !
Sends its varying detonations
Rolling o'er the bay's clear surface !
Bounding forth o'er mountain summits
Where their echoes catch its thunders
And repeat them loudly, wildly,
As if Nature's fierce artillery
Joined its mightiest cannonading
In one grand, triumphant salvo !—
In a thousand-voiced announcement
Of an iceberg's bold departure
On its evanescent journey !
From the glacier's towering breastworks
Down it slips, that brilliant fragment,
Grinding, creaking, as it courses,
Hastening now, then almost pausing
As it nears the gleaming edges,
That are all that lie between it
And its final downward launching.
One more slide and down it flashes !
Deep beneath the water plunging,
And they meet it, hissing, roaring,

Tossing spray in crystal rockets!—
Lashing foam in snowy vapors
High along the glacial ramparts,
Far along the lonely coast-line—
Until spray and foam united
Glow and shine, a million rainbows,
Arching icy points and snowbanks,
Shimmering bay and gloomy caverns—
While the deep reverberations
Onward roll—their distant mutterings
Echoing back more weird and softly,
Till they seem like shadow-voices,
Ere they lose themselves in silence!
Down that new-born iceberg plunges,
Rises, sinks and turns uncertain—
Bounding up, uniquely dancing,
Rising, diving, tumbling, ever
Breasting each new wave more bravely!—
Showing more and more the clearness
Of its glittering, beaming frontage;
Then it settles, smoothly sailing
O'er the billowy, crested waters

That are throbbing, almost groaning,
Under such wild agitation
As the stranger's advent wakened !
On it floats, its splendid beauty
Tipped above with frosted helmets !
Every seam by water rounded
Into softly glinting silver,
Touched with tones of clearest azure,
Deepening here, there gently changing
Into rainbow pearl and opal.
On it sails, its fair companions,
Each by just such pæans greeted
As this claimed when proudly launching,
Pressing toward the one bright bay-front ;
All like glorious ships in motion,
Manned by naught but wind and billows !
And the bay's tide-waters bounding,
Lash the shore with feathery foaming,
Every wave, as if indignant
At the ice-floe's bold adventure,
Swells in fiercely angry breakers,
And our ship, like frailest fabric,

Sways and dips, a trembling pigmy
In the ice-ship's changeful harbor!
But behold the glorious glacier!
Like a grandly ancient city
O'er which death has thrown his mantle,
And at once preserved its beauty—
Cold, imperishable, lovely!
Round it stands its gleaming ramparts,
And its breastworks, white as marble,
Break the wild, encroaching rollers
As they dash along its sea-wall:—
Great cathedrals, firmly standing,
Rear aloft their towers and turrets,
All their points like silver spearheads
Tipped with stars of heavenly brilliance!
Minarets with graceful tracings
Rear their walls of clearest crystal,
Touched with blue and gold and amber;
Over all the wave-lulled silence
Seems to wait the deep-toned chiming
Of the Angelus, or maybe
Of the Moslem's cry to Allah!

Here and there the snow has lingered
Like a halo, pure and spotless,
O'er a point whose turquoise tinting
Seems to pulse in trembling beauty,
While below, the rock-like bases
Turn to deepest dyes of azure,
Indigo, and shimmering purple.
Follow on where nature leading
Opens here and there a portal
Of such pure, translucent glory,
Of such shades of royal colors,
That we gaze in speechless wonder !
Every sense is lost in gazing !
Now a beauteous cavern grotto
Tempts us on, its roof is jeweled
With the clearest diamond settings,
Rubies, amethysts and sapphires
Lie around in bright confusion,
While a streamlet's tinkling music
Makes the scene more purely lovely,
More ethereal and entrancing !
Yawning chasms, walls of silver,

Bathed in deepest blue, lie open,
And the streams which flow beneath them
Murmur softly on their journey,
Stealing tiny stones and pebbles,
Gathering till to tint their waters
As they hasten on to empty
In the bay's expansive bosom.
Farther on, beyond the sea-line,
Massive bergs, whose wild impatience
Made them leave the parent glacier
Ere they came so near the water
As to dash into its keeping,
Stand like sentries, chilly passive,
Guarding safe the icy fortress;
Or a pale and soulless phalanx,
Like a sombre funeral cortege
Waits in apathetic patience
For the foremost floe to motion
And the rest to pass on slowly
Toward the sure but beauteous ending.
Can it be this massive monarch,
Whose bright life might be eternal—

Whose great walls and gleaming summits
Tower above us grand and lofty,
Whose bold presence makes us breathless,
And before whose glittering splendor
Human life seems but a shadow
And our forms but panting atoms—
Now and every day is moving
Forward, downward to its ruin ?
That its day of retribution
Every moment draws more closely ?
That the forest life it shattered
Soon will be avenged, and pillars,
Formed of blasted pines and cedars,
Shall remain to mark their province
When this great, majestic despot—
This huge pile of gelid grandeur—
Will have proved how evanescent,
How unstable are its bulwarks,
How ethereal are its segments ?
On it moves ! so slowly, surely ;
Yet its slow departure marking
As it grinds the rocks to powder,

As it graves its final signet
On the shrinking earth so deeply
That at least its name may never
Pass away for once and always !
Pressing on, it carves some tracing
On each rolling stone and boulder,
While some flinty, shining pebbles
Hold so close, it stoops and lifts them,
Bearing them away as trophies
From their place among the mountains.
Or, perhaps their clinging presence
Helps to make the final downfall
Scarce so bitter in its ending.
Be it so. But now we linger
Close beside the glacier's beauty,
Note his towering height—his splendor—
Try in vain to count the shadings
And the gorgeous, tinted pageant
That forever float around him
With their gold and blue and azure,
With their indigo and purple,
Flecked with frosted gold and silver;

Or with polished, soft enamel
Deck his sides, his cloven bosom,
His majestic head and shoulders—
Make his walls like sapphire glisten,
And his wondrous, ghostly city
Shine in glorious, heavenly beauty !
When the morn breaks o'er the glacier
Glittering spears of light shoot upward
From each turret-point and steeple—
From each shattered edge of crystal—
Rivalling far the clearest glances
Of the glorious orb's uprising !
When it sets, no gorgeous tinting
Of its farewell glow is wasted,
But 'tis caught on burnished surface,
Quivering point, or knife-like wedges,
Whence a million bright refractions
Gleam and shimmer, glance and sparkle,
As if rainbow gems were trembling
Ere they dashed their stainless glory
O'er the bay's expectant surface.
Crash ! the crystal city trembles !

Boom ! it thunders back, undaunted,
And above the snowy vapor
Rises fair, supremely glorious !
Free from earthly taint or tarnish,
Clear as though the gates had opened
And one moment flashed the splendor
From the pure, Eternal City,
Which no hand of man has fashioned,
And no years of blight can shadow !

MIRAGE IN ALASKA.

EARTH is held in spotless thraldom,
By the weight of winter draping,
That has spread abroad and hidden
All the tundra's tender blossoms,
All the velvet moss and sphagnum,
All the grass and weeds and willows ;—
That has swept the downy tuftings
From the slender stalks that held them
With such grace that zephyrs hastened
To disport among their beauty,—
To uplift and toss them lightly,
Till they shone like silver frosting
In the twilight's placid glimmer.
All are dead ! The stems bend meekly

With the snow that rests like blossoms
On each tiny spear and leaflet,
Of the dwarf-like birch and alders ;
And the willow's slender switches
Sway so gently that the snow-wreaths
Rest upon them as unruffled
As the down that clings so closely
To the water-fowl's broad bosom.
When the sunlight dares to enter
In this pure domain of winter,
Gems of every hue glance upward
From the earth and prisoned water,
From the bush and willow copses,
And the stark and ghostly sedges.
Now the birds do not disturb them,
Do not search among the rootlets,
Nor awake strange echo answers,
With their wings and raspy voices.
Clear and cold the day arises
With a deep and calm intensesness,
When the trader starts to journey
With his team of dogs, whose barking

Seems to come from distant valleys—
From the pale and cloudless ether—
From some place above the earth floor,—
Where they wait in cold impatience,
While the sled is rightly laden,
While their harness is adjusted—
Then away they bound ! The tundra
Flies beneath them as they hasten,
While the light of day can guide them
Toward the goal in peaceful safety.
What is that ? The way is altered !
Far ahead a copse of willows,
Or a lonely group of birches,
Bars the path he fain would follow.
On he goes, but slower, striving
To arrange how he may travel,
That his time shall not be wasted—
That his way will not be lengthened
By a weary, tedious détour.
Still the branches sway before him ;
Still the slender trunks stand boldly ;
And he drops his eyes and ponders,

And he frowns in earnest planning,—
Then he gathers close the lap-robes,
And he holds the reins more firmly,
Ready now to face the troubles
And to lose no time in fretting;
When, behold! The slender willows
And the birches' trunks and branches
Prove to be no more than grass-blades,
Nothing more than grass and seed-stalks,
Which the pure, clear air, frost-laden,
All astir with swift vibrations,
Magnified to grand proportions.
So the crystal waves passed onward,
Leaving clear his frozen pathway,
And the sled passed o'er the forest
That a moment since had mocked him—
Passed above and bent the grasses,
And the last year's stalks and branches,
That once swayed beneath a burden
Of perfumed and tender beauty.
On he speeds ; and then a lake-shore
Rises bold and high before him,

Guarding close the shimmering waters
That reflect the cliffs and cloudlands:
And he gazes, lost in wonder,
At the vast and limpid stranger,
Which, at near approach, grows distant
And at last proves but a valley.
Which the quivering air hung over
Ere it swept away, and with it
Bore the cliffs and rocks and waters.
There a river flows more placid
Than the fair Pacific's tide-waves,
And its shores rise to'ard the ether,
Lofty there, here low and craggy,
Covered o'er with moss and lichens:
While he looks it changes swiftly
To a wild ravine, whose roadway
Leads away through mountain passes,
With no stream or river near it !
'Twas an atmospheric picture,
Like the rest—a mirage taunting,
And the traveler wills that nothing
Shall have power to make him marvel !

On he bounds ! the day grows shorter
And the dogs must make the journey
Ere the long, cold night has fallen.
Now the welcome coast grows nearer,
And, behold ! the town, the station,
That he thought was still so distant,
Seems to bid him cheer and welcome :
Yes, he sees the trading station
And the quaint old mission chapel,
And the houses, somewhat altered
From the day he last beheld them.
As he looks the changing shadows
Make the windows gleam and twinkle,
Make the roofs and chimney places
Seem to bend and lean together ;
And the houses change position,
As he looks with longing vision
Toward his lonely journey's ending !
What ! the mission turns and trembles,
Rises, falls and sinks in darkness !
And the station rears up boldly,
Turns and drops to find its level !

Then the village rocks and trembles,
Quivers now, then drops so slowly
That he sees each roof and window
Sink beneath the gleaming water !
What a weird, a sad destruction,
And no hand to stay the danger !
But 'twas strange no human creature
Seemed to know the fate so awful
That was gathering close around them,
And besell them all unnoticed
Till, alas ! too late they perished
With their homes and all the village !
On he rides in hope of nearing,
And beholding if some remnant
May remain to tell the story
Of that trading station's presence.
On and on ! he finds no fissure,
Where the town may have been swallowed !
And he sees no broken timbers,
And no dead nor dying victims !
On for miles he rides and watches,
When at last his eyes are fastened

On a trading post, a chapel,
Houses, boats laid by for winter,
High cachés, with full provisions,
Men awaiting for his coming,
All alert for furs and ivory,
And for news of huntsmen's fortune!
Now his dazzled eyes grow clearer,
And his brain wakes up to reason,
And he knows the late disaster,
That he gazed upon so wildly,
Was the crowning, taunting mirage
Of Alaska's frost-bound tundra.

MOONLIGHT IN ALASKA.

SLOWLY, tenderly the daylight
Fades away, as loath to leave them—
Loath to take the golden brilliance
From the scenes that greet its coming,
Scenes that smile with joy to meet it
When it wakes above the mountains,
When its radiance dips in glory
All the land and ice and water,
All the dashing, leaping waters—
Waters surging, roaring, bounding,
Or, sweet, limpid water creeping
Slowly and serenely onward,
Sure to catch the truest picture
Of the silver orb, whose coming

Lofty, snow-crowned mountains welcome
With a light so pure, so holy,
That no taint of earth seems near them.
Not a sign is there to mar them,—
That soft splendor of the moonlight
And the snowy-crested giants
With their diadems of gem points,
Clearer far than rarest diamonds,
Holding high above the darkness—
Far aloof from aught to blast them,
All those silver pointed light-rays
That the calm, pale moon surrenders,—
Reaches out and gently prisons
On each mountain's crown of brilliants.
Down the rugged side she travels,
Where her lambent drapery touches,
Every spot her trailing garments
Rest upon, with feath'ry lightness,
Gleams in fair, electric brightness
While the seams and broken hollows
Which her timid feet pass over
Form a rayless, inky background

Drawn in lines of deepest darkness,
Seeming bottomless and fearful;
Or like bands of richest velvet
Trim her dainty, gauzy raiment,
Making every curving outline
Seem more fairy-like and lovely.
Trees and shrubs and trembling grasses,
Where her smiling face beams over,
Catch her rays and hold them lightly,—
Hold them softly on their leaf tips;
While the heavy, thicker foliage,
Which her rays have not discovered,
Seem to shrink in jealous wonder,
Darker seem and almost threaten
With their weird and cringing shadows!
Now her rays fall o'er the totems
Whose wild features, grin so fiercely
On the rippling, moonlit waters,
Making contrasts with the softness
Of the light she sheds so gently
That it rises on the wavelets,
Dancing with their every motion,



ALASKAN SETTLEMENT, BURROUGHS BAY.



Dimpling in the wind-kissed waters—
Spreading like a polished mirror,
Where no quivering air disturbs them,—
Where the gently sighing zephyrs
Ripple not the glass-like waters.
Staring eyes with no expression—
Eyes of beasts and man and fishes—
Great whales' eyes, and eyes that never
Held their place in aught created,
Seem to wink and leer grotesquely,
As the tiny, glittering cloudlets,
Crossing on their hurried journeys,
Cast their shadows where the moon-face
Paused awhile as if to study
And to understand the strangers.
On she moves. The mighty glaciers
Take her light, and steep its clearness
In their own pure azure tintings,—
Dye so deeply with their blueness
That 'twould seem it held forever,
Through its many miles of journey,
Still some tinges of the colors

Which the great ice-giants painted.
Wandering on, she pauses, spell-bound,
Close beside a Shaman's casket:
Tremblingly she gazes downward
On that horrid, lonely grave-house,
With its beastly masks and drumsticks,
With its paint and matted headgear ;
On the drums of shapes and sizes
Differing as each dire occasion
Needed more or less of pounding
To intensify the torture
Of some poor, despairing spirit !
And she hides her face in loathing
At the sickening, fetid odor
From the fast-decaying framework
Of the doctor, whose great talents
Could not save himself from yielding
To the monster, whose grim presence
He so often tried to vanquish
With his fearful noise and clatter,
With his awful, blood-congealing,
Horrifying masks and faces !

Here her presence brings no blessing,
So she hies to valleys waiting
For her light to bathe their verdure,—
For her sparkling scintillations
To repeat themselves in myriads
Of the drops of dew suspended
On the slender blades and tassels
Of the stalks of grass and barley,
On the tender, velvet beauty
Of the low, abundant grasses.
Here, she waits to point the Siwash,
Where the fish are plump and plenty,
Where the darting, finny salmon
Lives to fat and bright perfection.
There, she stoops to deck a grave-post
Of some dear one who has wandered
Out upon the great, green water,—
Out toward the distant island
Where the holy dead will waken.—
Here, her quivering light falls lightly
On the Eskimo's mound houses,
On their homes as lowly stationed

As the dens of bears and foxes.
And the Mah-le-moot's cliff eyries
Look more sadly, strangely lonesome.
But she brings them joy in showing
Where the snoring, lumbering walrus
Rolls his huge, uncomely body
Prone upon the shattered ice-float
That is bearing him, unconscious
Of the barbed harpoons uplifted,—
To the homes of those whose living
Waits upon his life's swift closing.
Here and there she smiles and wanders,
Always gentle, always tender.
And as though the dark-browed savage
Needed most her brilliant presence,
There she lingers, though the tropics
Hold such gracious charms toward her,
Though such dreams of luscious beauty
Wait to meet her fair uprising!
Wait to meet the timid moonbeams
As they beautify and gladden
Nature and her scenic glories.

AURORA.

CAN it be that once these mountains
Boasted robes of shaded verdure,
Touched with tints of moss and lichen,
Dark as night, or flushed and golden,
When the midnight sun held empire
Over all the distant region ?
Were these waters waved and ruffled
With the wind by sunlight tempered ?
And could boats surmount the rapids,
Or frail bird-life dive and flutter
In the waves that are now rigid
As if life had flown forever ?
Now a robe, as pure and spotless
As a soul which knows no evil,

Drapes the mountains from their bases
To the topmost craggy summits.
Rivers, caught while bounding swiftly,
Turned to ice in waves and ruffles,
Watch in clear and noiseless patience
For the day which brings new freedom.
Whirlpools, stilled by chilling fingers,
Wait in curving rings and eddies,
As a lovely form in marble
Waits the touch of life to give it
All it lacks of fair perfection.
O'er the earth the spotless mantle
Rests in graceful folds and wrinkles,
And the trees bow humbly, bearing
On each twig a lovely cluster.
Every blade of hardy grasses,
Every stem and empty seed-pod,
Holds its freight of feathery whiteness.
All is white and pure and lovely,
For Alaska's form is shrouded
In the winding-sheet which winter
Weaves and winds about her fondly,

When his sway has gained ascendancy
Over fitful summer's fairness.
Daylight comes, the chilling welcome
Makes her stay but short and cheerless,
But the night gleams thickly star-gemmed,
And its sway, which is not darkness,
But a soft, subduing absence
Of the sunlight's glittering presence,
Lingers long and yields but slowly
To the day's reluctant visits.
Silence, in its chill perfection,
Reigns among the hills and valleys,
All along the icy by-ways
Of the rivers, streams, and cascades
Which were bounding, clear as crystal,
From their steep and rocky cradles
When the north-wind touched them lightly,
And they froze in lucent drapings
O'er the rocks and trailing mosses.
Silence holds the spell-bound forests,
And the winds awake no echoes
From the shrouded crags and cliff-tops,

Save a low and muffled sobbing
That accentuates the quiet
Of the long, pale winter twilight.
Once a snow-white fox barked hoarsely,
But his voice returned and smote him,
And he crept away in terror
Of the strange and cold reception :
And some grouse, quite near the border,
Ventured forth to seek for berries,
But they went, no one knew whither,
When they found no food for hunting.
Stillness ! Hush ! that seems to wrap us
In a weird and formless presence—
Closes round and makes the starlight
Seem to wave in silvery circles.
Darkly blue the skies grow distant,
And each star and gleaming planet
Hangs alone and unsupported
In its own peculiar orbit.
List ! the slight electric crackle !
And, behold ! the sky is painted
In plain, quivering bands of yellow,

Glowing wide and bright, then narrow,
And then flashing broad and golden,
Sending long, bright crimson fingers
Far across the cloudless ether.
Rosy lights grow clear and vivid,
Pale to tints of faintest blushes,
Then burst out in glorious shading
Close beside the soft, blue azure
Where the sharp, clear edges mingle
In the softest shades of purple.
Pale-green shafts shoot out and quiver
In the glorious golden brightness !
Flaming pencils touch the hill-tops,
Sending slender rainbow arches
Down their glinting, shimmering mantles.
Bushes, trees and shining grass-blades
Catch the gleam of gold and crimson
And throw out swift, starry flashes
Toward the gay, auroral brightness !
In the north a glorious archway
Casts its glancing rays and shafting
And uplifts a glittering halo

Far across the dark-blue zenith !
Downward flings its mingled shading—
Gold and blue and green and crimson,
Yellow, tender pink, and purple
Lending charms to earth's fair features—
Shrinking from the icy contact—
And then sweeping through the cloud-paths
In such gorgeous, painted beauty
That no tongue with earth-born language
Can approach Aurora's splendor !

SUNSET IN ALASKA.

THROUGH the channel's placid waters
Peacefully our ship glides onward—
Onward, though the mountain shadows
Seem to bar the narrow passage,
Though the frowning crags bend darkly
And the pines send dirge-like whispers
From their homes upon the cliff-sides—
Onward, through a stream so narrow
That the ferns and slender rushes
Bend before the wake that follows
As we cleave the strait's clear bosom.
Now a water-fowl screams loudly
When we near his chosen islet,
And the startled fishes, springing,

Bound above their native waters
And then hide their shining beauty
In the channel's sandy runnels,
Or among the stones and seaweed
Close along the river edges.
Far above, the sky's pure azure
Bends to touch the water's surface,
Lending tints that, darker growing
As the mountain shades receive them,
Turn to deepest blue, flecked lightly
With the clouds, whose fleecy whiteness
Smiles among the darker shadings.
Softest winds send lightest ripples
Up and down, now dancing shoreward
And then running far before us
On our way through strait and channel.
Now the waning day grows rosy,
And the waves repeat the blushes
Which an ardent sun calls brightly,
As he throws his farewell glances
Over stream and shady by-ways,
Over wood and mountain forehead,

Over sky and earth and cloud-bank !
Golden gleams pierce willow thickets,
Setting slender leaves a-quiver ;
Shimmering shafts surprise the pine-cones
As they hide beneath the branches,
And the mosses catch the glory
Just an instant, as it passes !
Gold and blue, with rose-tints, mingle
In the sky and in the water,
And the mountain crests catch arrows
From the sunset's gilded quiver—
Catch them and then throw them outward
Till their brightness lights the narrows,
Till the shades of gold, repeated,
Glance from every wave and ripple !
On we glide ! our masts and bulwarks
Shining fair between the sky-glow
And the glinting strait's calm current.
On and out to broader waters,
Where no shadowy crest can offer
Frowning foils to sunset glories !
Either shore grows softly distant

As the purpling haze falls gently,
Tinging all the trailing margin
Soft with gleams of gold and roses ;
Sky and earth seem almost touching
As the glorious veil waves upward
Toward the land of cloud and sunlight,
Downward till the shimmering mirror
Seems to rise and touch the borders
That no human hand can measure !
Northward, eastward, clouds uplifting,
Roll like smoke in banks whose edges
Shine with gold and silver linings
Burnished to a dazzling brightness !
Westward, purple shades make contrasts
Rich with tones of crimson, turning
Brighter where the gold bars, streaming,
Pierce the gorgeous, shining texture !
Rosy lights shoot forth like javelins
Pressing close between the sun-rays,
Mellowing with their slender pencils
All the sharper points and lances.
Hush ! departing day fades, slowly,

Linger ing o'er the land and water,
Loath to leave such matchless beauty!
Far and wide the glorious colorings
Join in tints, so soft, so tender,
That the far-off sky draws nearer,
And the channel's swelling surface
Faithfully reflects each outline,
Each soft tint, each glow, each glimmer,
Until all is lost in glory!
Earth, and air, and sky, united—
Water, mountain-top and valley
Bathed and lost in one grand union,
In one gorgeous afterglowing!
On we float, our engine throbbing
As if its great heart was awestruck
With the sweet transcendent beauty,
With the day's grand dissolution!
And we gaze in speechless wonder,
Every breath in charm suspended,
As the waves and ether pulsate
With the myriad golden tintings—
With the million roseate shadings

Blending in such matchless splendor,
In such pure, translucent beauty,
That it seems the gates have opened
And the world beyond the shadows
Has drawn near and shed its glory
Over all ! while nature, silent,
Bends in reverent awe, receiving
From that glorious land a blessing,—
From the sun a benediction !



KILLISNOO, ALASKA.

APPENDIX.

1. To BERING'S VOYAGE TO ALASKA.—“On June 4th, 1741, Bering and his Lieutenant, Tschericov, sailed from Kamtchatka eastward, determined to prove the truth of the existence of a Western continent. Their vessels were named respectively “St. Peter” and “St. Paul.” In a few days the ships became separated in a storm, and the men never met again. The “St. Peter,” with Bering on board and in command, was driven to land and out to sea again, helplessly, for several weeks, until it was at last anchored on the shore of one of the Commander Islands, where Bering, heart-broken with disappointment and ill-health, died and was buried. The survivors returned to Kamtchatka in August of the following year, with such proofs of the wealth of the new-found country that they stimulated others to follow, and thus opened a rich source of revenue to Russia.”

2. IN “SITKA.”—“New Archangel,” the name given by Count Baranov to the new settlement made in 1804,

after the destruction of the original trading post, which was accomplished by the natives during his absence. He at first named it "Archangel Gabriel," then, to distinguish it from the old post, he called it "New Archangel;" but it gradually assumed the name of the tribe of natives belonging in that region, and "Tseetka" at last became the more euphonious "Sitka."

3. IN "ALGÆ OF ALASKA."—On many of the islands of the Aleutian chain and in that archipelago whose rocky desolation renders it impossible for timber to grow, there are periodical upheavals of kelp and other hardy sea-plants strewn along the coasts in immense windrows, some attaining a height of five or six feet. While the men are out in their kyacks fishing or hunting for seals or walruses, the women are busily engaged gathering and storing away the seaweed for fuel. Their work is laborious beyond conception, for they make enormous bundles and carry them on their backs, sometimes for miles. Imagine how oft-repeated the journey must be to lay in a sufficient supply for even a short time!

4. IN "HUMMING-BIRD IN SITKA."—Frequently the small ruby-throated humming-bird, which is so common in the Southern States, makes its appearance for a short time in and around Sitka. No one sees its going or coming, yet there it is, a tiny Southern gem among those Alaskan wilds.

5. IN "INDIAN RIVER."—Indian River is said to sup-

ply the only good drinking water in or near Sitka. It is a beautiful stream with romantically lovely spots along its course. It is quite a distance from some parts of the town, and it is interesting to watch the inhabitants of divers nationalities, with a most remarkable assortment of vessels, going to the river and returning from it with supplies of pure, refreshing water.

6. IN "ALASKAN MARRIAGE."—Some tribes among the Alaskans have more regard for women than others, but mostly they are considered of small importance, except so far as their services conduce to the pleasure or comfort of their masters.

7. IN "TOTEMS."—No one seems to be able to give the origin or history of these wonderfully absurd "totems." Some of them are very rudely cut, while others display a great deal of artistic power. A peculiarity belonging to them is that they are always placed to face the water, if there is any near by. They are undoubtedly looked upon with reverence, though there seems to be not the slightest foundation for the idea of their being worshipped or bowed down to as idols.

8. IN "A HAIDAH TAAMISH."—This description will be found to be by no means overdrawn, if the reader will consult the reports of missionaries who have worked long and faithfully to redeem them from their frightful practices. "Naw-looks" are evil spirits of the woods.

9. IN "AN INDIAN'S DREAD OF DROWNING."—Among

these benighted people, a person who dies by drowning is lost to all future happiness. The very nearest he may reach the blissful land is to be in sight of its beautiful green fields, and to be within hearing of the joyous songs of the happy.

10. IN "CO-E-KY, OR DEATH FEAST."—The positive knowledge of future struggles with poverty and discomfort cannot deter the Alaskans from sacrificing all they possess in these "death feasts" and "potlatches," partly because of the honor and glory of displaying so much, and partly because of the hope of obtaining equal or greater riches in the future by the power of the spirits who are invoked upon such occasions, and by neighborly returns of the compliment.

11. IN "POTLATCH."—These potlatches are held in commemoration of any wonderful achievement, as a celebration of a youth's succession to chieftainship of his tribe, as a kind of housewarming by individuals who wish to awe their neighbors with their grandeur—in fact, almost anything of the least importance is hailed as an opportunity for indulging in this, one of Alaska's peculiar customs. The prodigality with which riches are distributed at such feasts would be considered little short of insanity among civilized races. But these dusky people have a strong belief that their goods will be amply replaced by other tribes in future feasts and by the power of the great spirits who are propitiated in their performance.

12. IN "HOT SPRINGS OF ALASKA."—This sketch is not exaggerated. There are such hot springs near Sitka, and in several places along the Aleutian chain, whose warmth bestows marvellous beauty to the surrounding neighborhood.

13. IN "MORSE AND MAH-LE-MOOT."—Ookivik, or King's Island, situated in Bering Strait, is a desolate, barren island, upon whose rocky sides the cliff-builders hang their oddly-constructed, nest-like homes. They are compelled to live in this peculiar manner because it is near this island that they find the walrus, which is their chief sustenance.

14. IN "LEGEND OF NA-ASS RIVER."—Near Na-ass River, in the southern part of Alaska, a volcano has thrown lava and stones in a continuous stream until it resembles a river bed. The Indians, ever ready to find some preternatural cause for anything strange or wonderful, accept the legend as given, and point to the cremated river and the charred and bleaching debris as a warning to their children.

15. IN "PINNACLE ISLET."—Pinnacle Islet is a rock rising abruptly from the sea to the height of a thousand feet. It is five miles distant from the island of St. Matthew, which is the land nearest to it. It has been an active volcano ever since its discovery.

16. IN "LEGEND OF THE BIRTH OF BOGASLOV."—Bogaslov is an extinct volcano in Bering Sea, said to have been suddenly discovered after a great commo-

tion in the heavens and in the sea. It is true that it is every year growing cooler and more habitable for birds, and that sea-lions haul their slippery bodies upon its barren sides in greater numbers than they did some years ago.

17. IN "LEGEND OF THE LARGE GLACIER, STICKEEN RIVER."—On the Stickeen River, thirty-five miles from Fort Wrangel, there is an enormous glacier, about one thousand feet high, more than thirty miles long and nearly five miles across, about which this legend has been told for ages. Its gradual wearing away prevents its spanning the river now as it did years ago.

18. IN "CHILKAT LEGEND OF THE RAVEN."—The raven is regarded by the Chilkats as the most sacred of all living creatures—in fact, as the creator and up-holder of the world! Human lives have often been sacrificed to atone for some real or fancied injury or insult to the bird whose cast-off feathers even are regarded as sacred!

19. IN "LEGEND OF THE OWL."—T'linkets believe firmly in this creation of the owl. It is therefore looked upon with a mixture of disgust and fear, but notwithstanding it holds a prominent place among the totem emblems.

20. IN "LEGEND OF YEHL."—Yehl is the maker of wood and water, and next to the raven the greatest of all spirits. Yehl inspires more reverence than fear because of his goodness to his people when they were

suffering and in darkness. His feathers are treasured with great care and worn with pride on grand occasions, while the down from his breast has the power to keep evil spirits at bay, if it is only blown across the head of the one to be protected.

21. IN "LEGEND OF MOUNT EDGEcumbe."—Many natives have faith in the legend as herein given, others give it another form. A Siwash and his wife quarreled so fiercely that the woman fled, her husband in hot pursuit tried to strike her just as she reached the top of the mountain, when Edgecumbe opened and took her into its protection. Meanwhile the husband was changed into a fiercely howling wolf. The mutterings of the storm, they say, is the voice of the woman talking to the spirits of the mountain; the thunder is the growling of the wolf as he eats his prey which he goes to the valley to seek; but he invariably carries it to the spot at which his wife disappeared before he devours it. The bird into which Chethel turned was the osprey, or sea eagle. "Ah-gish-ahn-ahkon" means, "the woman that supports the earth."

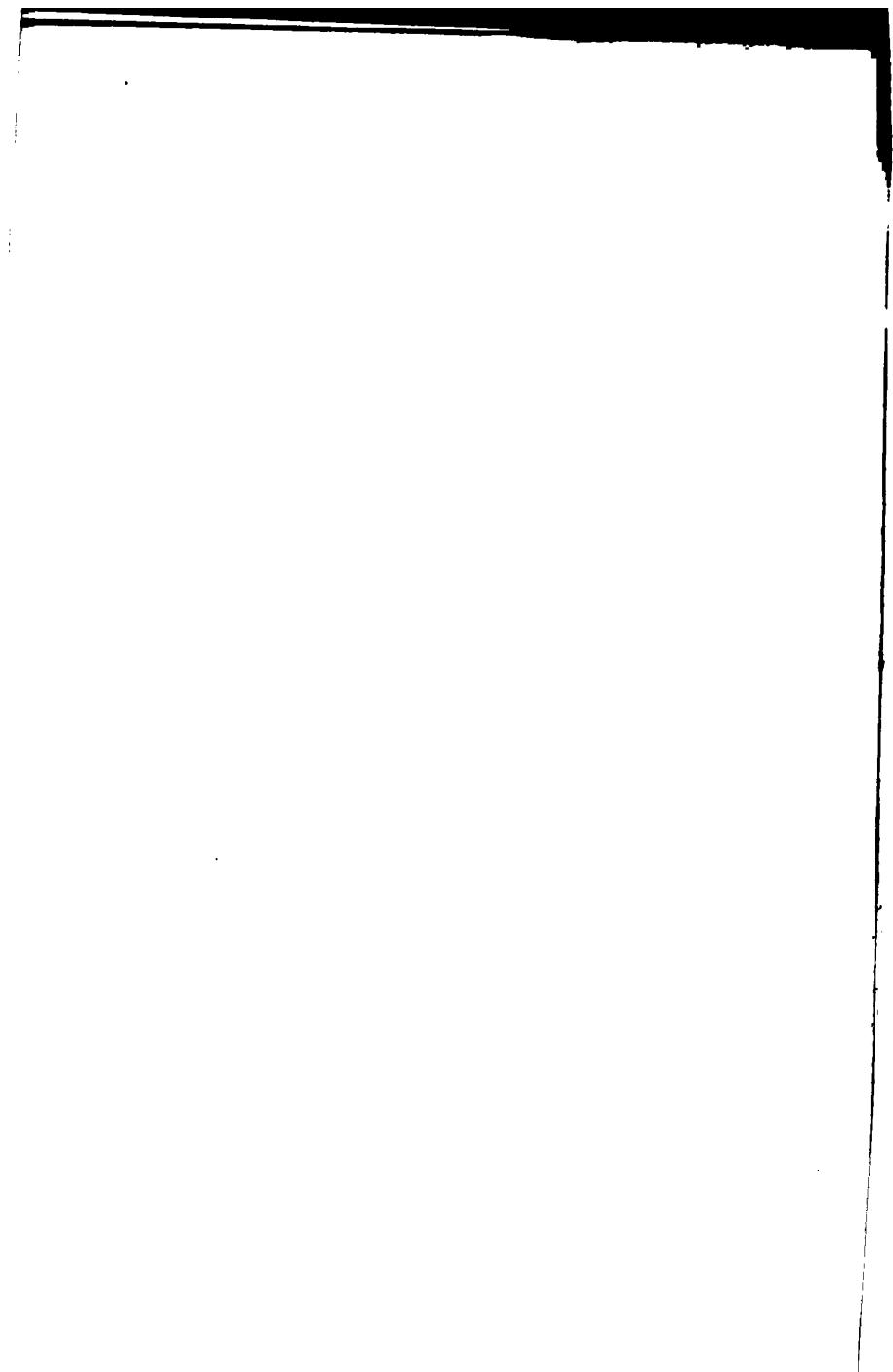
22. IN "LEGEND OF BARANOV CASTLE."—There are others besides some natives who have claimed to have seen the beautiful ghost of the castle, the victim of Baranov's villainous cruelty. It has been said that he had no other opposition to his niece's lover except that the rank of the second suitor pleased his ambition, and he willingly resorted to treachery to secure for his family such an alliance.

23. IN "CONCLUSION."—There are tribes in Africa with some peculiarities identical with those of some of the Alaskans. For instance, the labret in the lips, the edges of the ears are pierced and small iron rings or shells are inserted; they call gunpowder "fire medicine," and their doctors, medicine men.

For information see "Baviri Tribe," Stanley's *Darkest Africa*.









**RETURN TO → CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
202 Main Library**

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| LOAN PERIOD 1 | 2 | 3 |
| HOME USE | | |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

Renewals and Recharges may be made 4 days prior to the due date.

Books may be Renewed by calling 642-3405.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

SEP 05 1990

AUTO DISC SEP 27 1989

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
BERKELEY, CA 94720

1 NO. DD6

1

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C005247773

James

50520